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PhD Thesis
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'Chinese Architecture' + 'Western Architecture': A False Dichotomy

Hua Li

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Abstract

Title: 'Chinese Architecture' + 'Western Architecture': A False Dichotomy

Name: Hua Li

Supervisors: Mark Cousins, Stephan Feuchtwang

For some time, even if this is not expressed explicitly, 'Chinese architecture' and 'western architecture' are conceived and perceived as two homogeneous totalities, in opposition to one another. In consequence, the fast transformation of Chinese cities in the last three decades is often accounted for in terms of the influence of 'western architecture' upon 'Chinese architecture'. Indeed, the urban growth in this period has involved architectural expertise, products, technologies and designs from Europe and the USA. To some people, what is seen as 'new' is 'western', and hence, the transformation is a process of 'westernisation'. However, this is precisely what the thesis argues against. It argues that to use the category of the 'Chinese' and the 'Western' to explain the products of architecture and urbanism in last thirty years China is neither useful nor appropriate.

This thesis concerns the issue of 'conceptual translation' of architectural discourse from Europe and the USA into the context of China, as an opposition to 'linguistic translation' which concerns literal meanings of terms. Its examination focuses on the category that the concept 'western modern' indicates in Chinese architecture, and relates its operation and construction to the importation history of European and American architecture throughout the twentieth century, as well as pedagogy of architectural training, regularisation of design principles and methods, identification of architectural profession, practice of the architects' offices, organisation of design competition, and management of the city, mode of marketing and purchase in the real estate market, state politics and cultural interpretations. The analysis reveals that while waves of importation have sustained the formation of architecture as a modern practice in China from the early twentieth century up to now, they have not arrived as symmetrical reflection of what they are in the 'original' context. A difference, in comparison to European and American architecture, can be characterised by the absence of a coherent 'modernism' and the continuity of the modified 'Beaux-Arts' practice in Chinese architecture. Therefore, the assumption of 'westernisation' is wrong in its first place, as there is no such distinction that could be made between the 'Chinese' and the 'Western'.

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A Ph. D is a 'long' journey. It is 'long' not necessarily in a temporal or geographical sense. It is 'long' in the sense that the changes were made in my ways of looking at and thinking about things, the difficulties overcome in the process of writing and researching, and the enjoyment along the way. Although working on a Ph. D was my own journey, I was never alone. Indeed, it is inconceivable that I could have completed it without the consistent support that I have received.

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Notes:

1. Where parts of quotations are in bold they indicate emphasis added by the author of the thesis unless this is otherwise specified in a footnote.

The example of former (pp.132):

The term 'Chinese inherent style' first appeared in a document, the Planning of Capital Nanjing in 1929:

...the buildings in the administration area should adopt the **Chinese inherent style** to the most, and every merit of ancient [Chinese] palaces should be utilised.

The example of latter (pp.141):

On the 28th of March 1955, the People's Daily issued an editorial, *Fighting against Waste in Construction*. On behalf of the Central Committee and the Central Government, it alleged that:

The principle of architecture, as the Party and the Government have already pointed out, is that **every construction should be functional, economic and beautiful when the circumstances allow**. [...] **What is the main mistake of current construction? This is not taking account of economic principle**. [...] One reason for the waste in construction is the formalist and revivalist thoughts among some of our architects. Many architects do not want to do standard design, and regard it as a third class job. They want to do individual design, to design big buildings, luxurious buildings. **Under the pretext of opposing 'structural-ism' and 'inheriting traditional architecture', they develop an approach to 'revivalism' and 'aestheticism'**.

In its footnote: Editorial (1955). Quoted from: Yang, Yongsheng (2003). pp.3-5. [...] The words in bold are from the original text.

2. Volume 1 is the main text of the thesis with full illustrations. Higher resolution of such images are provided in Volume 2.

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Introduction

Research Background and Questions – An Autobiographical Account

It is unusual to start a thesis with an autobiographical account. But in this case, I think it is justified.

This thesis is about architecture and urbanism in China over the last three decades. In particular it argues against the assumption that what has characterized the development of Chinese architecture and cities over this period is a process of 'westernisation'. In doing so, the thesis will deal with two main issues: the concepts that are used to explain 'importation' from European and American architecture, and the architectural situation itself in China from the 1980s onwards. The research immediately encounters two difficulties. On the one hand, the meanings of terms that are often used in such discussions, such as 'western', 'modern', 'modernism', etc., which seem to be self-evident, are in fact highly 'ambiguous'. When they are employed to interpret 'importations', a different meaning between an English-speaking context and Chinese context often emerges. For instance, in China, 'western modern' is often used to describe a range of buildings whose forms normally refers to certain building styles in Europe and the USA¹; they might, for example, have a high-modernist appearance, or a glass curtain

¹ The problematic notion of the 'western modern' will be examined in Chapter One. In order to allow readers to understand how the question at the heart of this thesis first raised itself, this Introduction will stick to the usage familiar in Chinese-speaking context.

wall with 'Ionic' capitals. However, in English, there is no fixed set of features covered by the term 'western modern'. Definitions provided by dictionaries and normal semantic usage are not adequate to explain how this divergence of meaning has taken place. In addition, when official definitions play an ideological role, they are far from sufficient to address actual usage – the categories that the terms/concepts indicate rather than the meanings that they signify.² Therefore, apart from checking the statements and documents, a specific interpretation needs to be added in order to make the effect and operation of the categories more intelligible.

On the other hand, the research will refer to the large number of recent texts on the history of Chinese architecture in the twentieth century - especially with regard to the dramatic increase in the number of buildings and the expansion of cities over the last thirty years. These texts would include archives, materials, interviews with practicing architects, and those that draw on the writings of architectural historians. Undoubtedly, there are some works dealing with these matters in Chinese. But their writings are based more on political history than archives of practice. Inasmuch as practice appeared not to be well documented, it seemed difficult to find a means of dealing with this state of affairs. Then it occurred to me that I myself have lived through this period and am a kind of 'product' of the system: my own story could be seen as crucially relevant to the present



Fig. 0-1.

² In Appendix 6 of this thesis, we trace the definition change of 'modern' and 'communism' in *Cihai* – the most authoritative dictionary – from 1936 to 1999, in order to show how political ideology intervenes the official definitions of the words

research. Of course, I am aware of the dangers and pitfalls of personal testimony. But I have tried as far as possible to check my own documentation of this period with the experiences of friends and professional colleagues.

I belong to the generation of architects who were born during the Cultural Revolution, and who trained and practiced during the Reform period. I grew up in a work unit – the Xi'an Architecture Technology University, which is one of the so-called 'eight old architectural schools' (*'lao ba xiao'*) in the country.³ Xi'an, the city where I lived for sixteen years, is a historic city and major centre of tourism in the northwest of China. It possesses among other architectural attractions a preserved city wall and an urban grid fabric. In order to elevate the character of the city, its architecture has long tried to bring 'history' into the present; or to use the terms familiar in China, to search for a combination of the 'traditional' and the 'modern'. (Fig. 0-2) In 1986, I went to Chongqing Institute of Architecture and Engineering (now Chongqing University) – another one of the 'eight' – to study architecture at both undergraduate and graduate schools. Chongqing is an industrial and a mountain city in southwest China. Its topography together with its vernacular buildings and juxtaposition of countryside and urban areas makes for a unique urban landscape. The 'vernacular' character of its architecture and its relation to 'modern' structures has long been an academic issue there. (Fig. 0-3) In 1993, after graduating with a master's degree, I was assigned



Fig. 0-2.



Fig. 0-3.

³ Li, Xiaodong and Chong, Keng Hua (2003).



Fig. 0-4.

to Shenzhen and worked as an interior designer and freelance architect. Shenzhen is a young commercial city in the south of China on the border with Hong Kong. From 1980 when it was designated as one of the first Special Economic Zones to 2004, it developed from a small town with a population of 310,000 to a big city with 10,290,000 residents. Until Shanghai Pudong was opened up in the early 1990s, Shenzhen had been at the forefront of 'new' architectural ideas, styles and technologies. (Fig. 0-4) To many Chinese architects and academics, architecture in Shenzhen is 'modern' but has no 'culture'.

Throughout the whole course, 'western' architecture – its buildings, theories, ideas and technologies – was often referred to in discussions and projects, and was explicitly or implicitly associated with the notion of the 'modern'. However, what the term 'western' referred to was unclear. By default, being 'modern' was somehow regarded as equal as to being 'westernised'. Some people thought that the problem of Chinese architecture and cities was the imitation of the 'west' and hence the loss of their own characteristics. Others argued that the 'imitations' were very superficial and did not embody the 'real' merit of 'western' architecture. This kind of phenomenon was once satirised in the manner of Père David's Deer ('four unlikes' in Chinese) – 'not Chinese, not western, not ancient [traditional] and not modern' (*buzhong, buxi, bugu, buyang*). I myself did not really realise the difference until 1998 when collaborating with an office from the USA. When first exchanging the portfolios, my colleagues and I were surprised to see that they still used free-hand sketches, and the architects

from the American office were amazed by our computer rendering. To my mind, their proposal was nothing special when compared with those that we knew from magazines and books, and to which ours referred. However, there were still some apparent differences, not so much in terms of style, use of building materials, tools of representation, and even 'ideas'. Instead, these differences seemed to be more than the sum of these factors, and were something to do with what I called the 'starting point' at that time. Yet, I did not really know what it was or how to characterise it.

In the same year, the international competition for the National Grand Theatre in Beijing was inaugurated. That was the first international competition for a national project in China since the 1950s. Leaving personal preference aside, one thing that became more evident than before was the difference between the projects of Chinese architectural offices and those of foreign offices, even though they might share certain considerations, such as monumentality, context, etc.⁴ It was around that time that people began to talk about two things: the necessity to learn the 'method' of 'western' architecture rather than 'form'; and the problem of Chinese 'translation' and interpretation, which could be seen as having distorted the 'original' meanings of 'western' theories and works in the first place. Since I was willing to know exactly what these problems were, I decided to go abroad to study after practicing for eight years.

⁴ My friends and I performed an experiment at this point, the result of which was that without even knowing the names of the architects and architectural offices, we found we could distinguish which proposals were from Chinese offices and which ones were not.

My purpose, then, was quite simple. I wanted to know what happened and was happening in the 'west', and if it was true, the differences between Chinese architecture and 'western' architecture. In 2001, I came to London and worked on a PhD at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA). At that time, the AA was not as well known as it is now in China. Although its reputation was acknowledged in certain circles, very few people could tell what the AA exactly was or what it did.⁵ My decision to come to the AA was mainly based on two reasons. One was its location: London. Since the 1990s, several Chinese cities claimed that their aim was to become an international metropolis. I was curious to see what an international metropolis would be like. The other was the introduction of the 'Histories and Theories Programme', whose point of departure was 'modernism' and whose courses would focus on twentieth century architecture and urbanism. This fitted my own interest in knowing about a historical process and context that lay behind the contemporary practice of 'western' architecture.

I was 'shocked' by what was going on at the AA when I first arrived, although I was quite prepared for seeing things that were very different from what I was used to. In the first week, I went to several presentations given by the unit masters of Intermediate and Diploma Schools, the students of the AADRL Phase One and a graduate from Landscape Urbanism. I was

⁵ From my point of view, even though the AA is quite well known as an experimental school in China, not many people know what the AA is doing and how the system is organised and run.

impressed by the diversity, the images, physical models and computer animations that I had never seen before, and was amazed to find that there were no 'building designs' and renderings with which I was familiar. Meanwhile, I attended the introductory courses for some programmes, such as 'Histories and Theories', 'Housing and Urbanism' and 'Environment and Energy' in the Graduate School, and General Studies (now 'Histories and Theories') of the Diploma School. Most of the topics were just entirely new to me. I found that the more technological the courses were, the easier they were to understand; the more theoretical, the more difficult. The experience was exciting and yet frustrating. On the one hand, it was fascinating to see so many new things; that was why I had come here. On the other hand, it was extremely difficult to understand what people at the AA were talking about and doing, and why. Such experience was not just mine. The Chinese students at the AA, whom I knew through the following years, shared the same difficulties, when they finished their training in China and first came to study in the UK.⁶ Certainly, a first obstacle that we all shared was the poverty of our English. But as time went on, I gradually realised that this was not just a problem of language, but more profoundly to do with a gap in architectural knowledge. Even though I understood the English words literally, I could not get the point 'architecturally'. I will come back to this issue later and will explore it throughout the whole thesis. To understand the 'shock' that I experienced and

⁶ At that time, a group of Chinese speaking students at the AA gathered together and set up an informal forum to exchange what we learnt from different programmes, to share experiences and interests, and to discuss 'new' issues and the questions that interested us. Our first discussion was about the differences between architectural training at the AA and in China. This kind of discussion was later extended to students from different schools.

the questions at the heart of the thesis, we first of all need to outline the architectural training that I had received in China.

When I had first enrolled in university, architecture was not a well-recognised profession. To people who were not in building-related fields, 'architecture' was often confused with civil engineering. Indeed, according to the system of national higher education, architecture was and still is an engineering discipline. All architectural schools were subject either to engineering-based universities or to specialised institutes of building sciences. Students who wanted to study architecture had to pass a General Examination for Science and Engineering. Sometimes, the acquisition of certain drawing skills was made an additional requirement for entry.⁷ In the public sphere, although there were a number of famous landmark buildings, such as the Ten Grand Buildings in Beijing, their architects' names were hardly associated with them.⁸ However, by the mid-1980s, as cities expanded, architecture was becoming a popular subject. I was told then that in the near future, 'architects' would take over the leading position (*longtou*) from the civil engineers in the field of building construction.

The change came about in the mid-1990s. In 1990, after

⁷ The sketch exam did not take place in every province before recruitment to universities started. Even when it did, it was far less stressful than the General Examination. Apart from providing a reference record of the students, it also acted as a sign warning the students of the specialities required when studying architecture. The more serious and indispensable one was held after new students registered. It would be suggested to students who had no basic skills that they ought to change to the other departments, such as civil engineering, or equipment engineering. Passing the sketch exam is no longer held to be a condition for enrolling in architectural schools, although most architectural schools retain it as a way of assessing beginners.

⁸ The cause of the situation was complicated. Because many works were accomplished on the basis of collective collaboration, to some extent, it became hard to attribute works to individual architects.

completing a four-year undergraduate programme in the Faculty of Architecture, I was granted a degree of 'Bachelor of Engineering'. In 1993, however, I graduated from the postgraduate programme with a degree whose title was 'Master of Architecture'. Meanwhile, in architectural practice, 'architect' as a title became separated from that of 'engineer', and a national Architect Registration scheme was launched in 1994. Partly because of official recognition and partly because of a fever in the design market, more and more people acknowledged 'architecture' as a particular occupation. However, still to many people, including architects and architectural students, 'architecture' was a technical profession with an artistic aspect, which was mainly conceived in terms of 'making the appearance of a building more beautiful'.

The institutional categorisation of 'architecture' determined the direction of architectural training. From my point of view, architectural training in China was systematically organised in order to prepare for practice. This did not mean that the training was about how to make a building 'to stand up' in terms of construction, but was more about how to draw a building scheme that could meet the functions of the building, the financial and technical specifications and the feasibility of the building structure. In my university, both building mechanics and construction were taught, with the former aspect being covered over one and half years from the Second Year to the Third Year. In most schools, building mechanics was taught by tutors from the civil engineering department and was almost as

comprehensive as it was for the civil engineering students. My school then underwent a reform of the syllabus that attempted to de-emphasise detailed calculations and put greater stress on general principles. In either case, the course itself did not refer to actual buildings or actual constructions. As a consequence, the principles became doctrines to obey and constraints on architectural design. In a similar way, the 'Building Construction' course did not make any studies of actual buildings. This educational process was conducted via two-dimensional drawings.

Indeed, drawing was a fundamental skill in architectural training. In the First Year, three related courses dealt with this: 'Primary Architectural Design', 'Fine Arts' and 'Descriptive Geometry, Shade and Perspective'. The Fine Arts course ran for two years – charcoal sketch in the First Year and watercolour in the Second. In theory, this was not just about drawing skills, but also concerned with the aesthetic taste that sustained the artistic nature of architecture.⁹ 'Primary Architectural Design', on the other hand, was about professional drawing: how to write the proper fonts – *gongcheng zi* –, ¹⁰ how to work through the process from a sketch in pencil to a formal drawing in ink, how to draw a proper plan, elevation and section, and how to do ink and colour rendering. The course ended up with two 'small designs with simple functions' – an entrance and a teahouse – which seemed to be more about how to represent a building

⁹ Chang, Yung Ho (2001). Yung Ho Chang has criticised the drawing-based architectural training in China as 'Fine-arts' architecture in his article *On Architectural Education* in 2001.

¹⁰ The school once held a '*Gongchengzi* Competition' for students in the First Year.

scheme properly than how to organise a space.¹¹ In the Third Year, there was a course called 'Architectural Representation' (*jianzhu biao xian tu*), which provided more practical training, for example, the skills of using different 'media', such as pen with water colour, pen with coloured pencil, marker pen, gouache, etc. Physical modelling was quite absent. In the first two years, design quality was largely accounted for by drawing quality – or to use a term from that time, 'representational capacity' (*biao xian neng li*). I did not realise then that this training was very much based on the 'Beaux-Arts' education system, and only began to understand this when I studied at the AA. (Appendix 1)

The 'Beaux-Arts' system was hardly ever explicitly discussed, although everyone seemed to know somehow that it was a foundation of architectural education in China. In general, this foundation was acknowledged to be a form of fine arts training that sustained artistic quality in architecture. As far as I know, the system of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts was not clearly described in China until Gu Daqing's article *Atelier Workshop and Design Laboratory* was published in 2001.¹² But in terms of student experience, what we thought we learnt was to do 'architecture' rather than 'Beaux-Arts' architecture. In our

¹¹ My actual experience was slightly different. Since a young tutor was in charge of the teahouse design, he gave more encouragement to students when it came to developing the expression of personal ideas. This understanding was acquired when I looked back over the whole training process.

¹² Gu, Daqing (2001). In 2007, Gu published another article, *The Beaux-Arts Education in China*, which is so far the most detailed examination of how the pedagogy of the Beaux-Arts accounts for the curriculum and methods involved in architectural training in China, and of 'its influence on Chinese students in terms of working method and design attitude'. Gu, Daqing (2007). In 1944, Tong Jun wrote an article on *Architectural Education of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*. The article was not published until 2000 when the *Tong Jun Works* came out. Nonetheless, Tong Jun's article seems quite brief. Tong, Jun (2000).

discussions, 'Beaux-Arts' as a term was actually mentioned less frequently than 'modernism', 'postmodernism', etc. Now I would put it the other way around: the 'Beaux-Arts' was a precondition for those discussions in the first place.

The mid-1980s was a heyday of 'postmodernism' in China. I was aware of 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' almost at the same time in the First Year from senior students and publications. To some extent, 'modernism' at that time was understood as what was criticised by 'postmodernism'. But for us, the distinction between 'modernism' and 'Beaux-Arts' architecture was unclear. Journal articles aside, the books that I read then were mixed. They included books whose contents were based on the 'Beaux-Arts' system, such as Peng Yigang's *Space Composition of Architecture* and Talbot Hamlin's *The Principles of Composition* (translated by Zou Denong), books on 'modernism', such as Tong Jun's *New Architecture and Trends* and Bruno Zevi's *Architecture as Space* (translated by Zhang Sizan), and the book on 'postmodernism' – Charles Jencks's *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (translated by Li Daxia). Readings were not systematically arranged or guided by tutors in order to link critical points one to another. I grasped them according to what was in vogue and what I could find in bookshops. Architectural publications, especially those on theory, were not common at the time. For instance, Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture* was translated and published in 1981, but was not widely circulated. I could not find a copy until 1992 when another translation came out.

Nonetheless, if the 'postmodernist' critique of 'modernism' was relatively clear, the opposition of 'modernism' to the 'Beaux-Arts' system was quite hazy for me, since the 'Beaux-Arts'-based books were about architecture in general, and incorporated certain elements of 'modernism'.

Take the notion of 'composition'. In our understanding at that time, 'composition' was supposed to be a 'universal' principle of aesthetics and means of practice for the generation of architectural spaces and building forms from ancient to 'modern' times. 'Modernism' was not regarded as something that contradicted this, but continued it and made 'new' contributions to it. For instance, in my first year, the school launched a reform agenda, as a result of which a course on 'composition, whose contents were based on 'modern' graphic design and even derived from Bauhaus's 'Elements of form and colour theory', was taught.¹³ But since this course paralleled the 'drawing' courses in which 'composition' relied on the 'Beaux-Arts' principles, this was not perceived as an opposition but as a complement. This was true also of academic writings. In Peng Yigang's book, I. M. Pei's East Wing of the National Gallery in Washington and Viljo Revell's New City Hall of Toronto were characterised as 'new ideas and new means of modern architecture in the composition of building volumes'.¹⁴ The analysis of the book, as Peng admitted, was based on Hamlin's *Forms and Functions of Twentieth-century Architecture* published in 1952 and N. C. Curtis's *Architectural Composition*

¹³ Wick, Rainer K. (2000). pp.52-91.

¹⁴ Peng, Yigang (1983). pp. 250.

published in 1923, even though its contents contained more 'modern architecture' rather than only focussing on 'classical' buildings.¹⁵ However, both Hamlin's and Curtis' books were developed from Julien Guadet's *Éléments et Théories de l'Architecture* and retained a sort of descent from the 'Beaux-Arts' system. This situation, however, does not mean that 'modernism' was not regarded as a 'revolution' against nineteenth century architecture, in terms of forms, design process and a response to the development of industrialisation at both a technological and an economic level. It simply means that 'Beaux-Arts' architecture and 'modernism' were not clearly distinguished in terms of concepts, organisation, perceptions, and techniques to materials and objects. For a student who fulfilled this training was supposed to be able to design a 'modernist' style building and an eclectic building at the same time.

The situation was made more complex and puzzling when 'postmodernism' was introduced. From my point of view, 'postmodernism' was never entirely accepted in China. Instead, it was taken on in coincidence with different views. In fact, many of the older tutors in my school did not accept 'postmodernism' in the first place. For them, the ornaments of the 'postmodernist' projects were uneconomical, the forms were eccentric, and the theory was intricate. That they later partially agreed with it came to terms with its criticism of the uniformity of building appearances and its promotion of historical and traditional

¹⁵ Interview with Peng Yigang by Hua Li, 12 February 2007.

references in the 'new' creations, i.e. a 'modern' architecture with local or 'traditional' characters and styles. But for young tutors and students, 'postmodernism' was regarded not only as a 'new' school of architecture in the 'west', but also as a sort of revolt against the conventions of architecture in China. The distorted proportion, the 'misplacement' of building elements, the 'new' terminologies and even the cynical attitude contradicted what orthodox Chinese architecture had believed in: unity, harmony, efficiency, economy, rationality, etc. Yet, its references to history and local customs and promotion of cultural pluralism fitted the broader contemporary movement of 'seeking cultural root' (*wenhua xungen*) that had emerged as a reaction to its suppression in the Cultural Revolution.

In the later years when 'postmodernism' passed its heyday, it gained a 'new' interpretation. Instead of being thought of as a particular architectural school or style, it was regarded as a reflection of the 'postmodern' situation of contemporary Chinese culture and cities, i.e. coexistence and mixture of 'pre-modern', tradition and local continuity with 'modern', 'western' and global influences. As Wang Mingxian, an art and architecture critic, said:

What makes Chinese architecture postmodern is not the style of the individual buildings but the characteristics of the city as a whole. Chinese postmodernism is characterized by its spatial plurality, its hybridity, and its inclusiveness, in which various schools, theories, and ideologies coexist and compete in the same socio-economic environment. But Chinese cities also deeply reflect the cultural traditions of an ancient East Asian civilization. The diversity, complexity, and fragmentation of contemporary Chinese architectural culture betrays a kind of conscious, sober schizophrenia indicative of the cultural logic of the contemporary

world as it is articulated on Chinese terrain.¹⁶

In one way or another, the notion of 'postmodernism' in Chinese architecture was quite vague. Whether it was raised as a 'new' importation from the 'west' or as a 'new' description of architectural phenomena in China, it did not necessarily mean an opposition to the existing system. Instead, it was often regarded as something 'new' coming after 'modernism'. This view led to the misunderstanding that 'postmodernism', which included various schools 'after modernism', prevailed throughout the world in place of 'modernism'. So the Chinese architect who visited Europe in the late 1990s commented:

I thought 'postmodernism' had been everywhere, but actually the majority of the new buildings in Europe were 'modernist'.

From the viewpoint of an architectural student at that time, the popularisation of 'postmodernism' had as its therein pedagogical backgrounds: the 'vacuum' of architectural theories and the practical orientation of work in the design studio. During my years in university, there was simply no proper course on architectural theory: only in the first semester of the Third Year, did the *History of Foreign Architecture* touch upon some theoretical issues; and the History of Chinese architecture, taught in the second semester of the Second Year, offered even less. History after the 1950s was not touched, and history from the nineteenth century to the 1940s was still very 'political'. In consequence, two effects were profound. On the one hand, 'history' was regarded as the documentation of historical facts,

¹⁶ Wang, Mingxian (1997). pp.163-164.

which had nothing to do with the current practice and situation. On the other hand, 'theory' was thought to be an application of philosophy(-ies) to architecture, rather than an outcome of theorising architectural problems and issues from the 'facts' and the history. These two effects led to a critical disjuncture between practice and historical and theoretical discussions. In fact, for many tutors, the job of an architect was to design a building. Theories and histories were not very useful. But students were 'hungry' for something 'new' and something other than just 'designing a building'. At that time, and I guess right up until now, what students were more interested in was not modern Chinese architecture but contemporary architecture outside China, especially in Europe and the USA. The introduction of 'postmodernism' particularly filled the 'vacuum'.

This 'hungriness' also related to teaching methods in the design studio. The design studios in my school, as well as in other architectural schools, were organised according to building types. It started from the 'small and simple' ones – such as the gallery, department store, school, etc. –, to the 'large and complex' ones – such as the cinema, hospital, residential area and overall urban design. The final project aside, it finished with the 'Vernacular Museum', which was supposed to provide more space for the expression of 'cultural meanings' and personal ideas. Every semester had two 'long term' projects taking eight or nine weeks, and one sketch design (in the Beaux-Arts' term, *esquisse*) that focused on developing an idea into a proper proposal in a short time. As far as I understood, the philosophy

behind it was that students ought to learn skills, techniques and principles first and then be able to use them to express ideas.

This philosophy sustained the teaching structure of design studio, which normally consisted of two parts: lecture(s) and the process of design or exercise. In the first week, there were lectures to introduce the general design principles of a building type – its function, key requirements, relationship between different parts, circulation, typical plans, character, advantages and disadvantages of different solutions, etc. The principles were often demonstrated and illustrated by real projects. For the rest of the time, the students' job was to carry through the principles with a particular design brief and site and to meet the requirements of the economic and technical index under the guidance of the tutors. The design process began with analysis of the site and the composition of the plans, and then proceeded to the formation of elevations and perspectives, the outcome of which would lead to a readjustment of the plans. The process was conducted in an orderly way, and thinking about all the factors simultaneously was encouraged. This training might have been efficient in terms of corresponding to practice. But there was clearly a danger of design becoming purely mechanical.

An extreme case in my experience was in the Second Year. When designing a secondary school, most students in my class (thirty students) came up with similar spatial arrangements – the plans – and in consequence, similar and simple building forms.

The differences between the schemes were minor, mainly about the location of the lecture hall and the treatment of facades. As far as the tutor was concerned, the 'best' model for the plan of a school had already had been arrived at in terms of functional and economic efficiency. But for our students, this economic constraint was a 'killer' to any innovative idea.¹⁷ A dramatic change occurred after a young tutor took over the studio at a stage that all plans were settled and the final draft of the proposal was about to be submitted.¹⁸ Without making substantial changes to the spatial relations, we reconfigured the facades and added some elements in order to make a building have certain 'meanings' and characteristics. That was the moment of moving from frustration to enjoyment in doing design. Clearly this way to acquire the 'meanings' was highly superficial, but we were excited with finding our own 'voice' in the projects and with talking about something 'meaningful' rather than just concentrating on the issues of financial and technological feasibility. It was at this point that the critique of 'functionalism' was echoed.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the weakness of 'postmodernism' was gradually recognised. This recognition contained two aspects. On one side, people began to question the superficiality of its approach to the acquisition of 'meanings'. As the approach to making a 'postmodernist' building was not very different from the previous one adopted for creating

¹⁷ Economic constraint was a typical source of tension that existed between tutors and students then. However, probably the most tragic thing about this was that when the economic constraints were loosened a few years later, we did not actually see many innovative projects and ideas coming out.

¹⁸ The design process in the design studio was organised in three or four stages: the first sketch, the second sketch (for long term projects), the final draft and the final proposal.

'modernist', 'eclectic' or 'Chinese characteristic' buildings, 'postmodernism' had not produced such 'new' things as had been expected. The 'meanings' thus became a sort of additional 'attachment'. On the other side, criticism of 'postmodernism' was heard from outside China, and the 'newer' trend 'Deconstructive architecture' began to be introduced. However, from my point of view, the fading of 'postmodernism' had a side effect that has not been clearly addressed in academic circles: it strengthened the suspicions about architectural theory. Because 'postmodernism' did not produce substantial changes in architectural design, a lot of tutors and students thought that theory was no more than a rhetorical tool, and the use of new terminology was just 'a game of terms' (*wenzi youxi*). This critique that was sustained by the practical view of learning technique from the 'west' in turn enhanced it. We will analyse the cause of this situation in Chapter One. But to my mind, what happened with the introduction of 'postmodernism' happened with all imports – Deconstruction, critical regionalism, tectonic architecture, etc. – from then right up to the present. The only difference was that the duration from introduction to 'stylisation' and 'fading' was shorter.¹⁹

In parallel, and often intertwined with 'importation', the pursuit of the 'Chinese character' or 'Chineseness' in architecture was constantly promoted. I cannot remember how this issue first got

¹⁹ To say this, I do not mean that there were no serious discussions or personalities involved in the introductions. What I describe is simply a general phenomenon. My point is that when the 'new' things were so easily and quickly popularised, there was not enough space and time to comprehend, debate, examine and rethink. When they were largely flattened to fashion of style one after another, the critical potential that the 'imports' could bring to the development of Chinese architecture was quite easy to lose.

into my mind. It seemed to have been there as an orthodoxy for some time. In my years in university, this issue was reiterated under different names – ‘national style’, ‘spiritual resemblances’ (*shensi*) to Chinese tradition, contextual respect, cultural identity, local character, etc. Conservation of historical cities and the preservation of vernacular areas were often discussed. At the beginning, there were a few questions concerning the conflict between ‘modernisation’ and the promotion of ‘national style’. Soon after, it became readily acknowledged that a ‘modern’ creation ought to possess recognisable ‘Chinese characteristics’, and this kind of question was heard and raised with decreasing frequency.²⁰ As a student studying in these circumstance, I did not question the proposition that it was necessary to pursue a form of architecture with ‘Chinese characteristics, and instead felt that it was certainly the responsibility of Chinese architects to find a way of achieving and realising these in their work.

To preserve a unique Chinese or local ‘tradition’ was central to this pursuit. No matter how different were the views people held, the common understanding was that Chinese architecture had its own ‘tradition’ which was rooted in a distinctive Chinese culture. Nonetheless, the ‘tradition’ in its definition had a particular scope. It normally referred to the ‘primes’ (*jinghua*) that were inherited from ancient times. Urban culture and living styles of the Nationalist and Revolutionary periods were rarely referred to. When I was in university, the first theoretical book

²⁰ In a broad cultural sense, this acknowledgement corresponded with the movement concerned with ‘seeking cultural roots’ that was seen in the literature of the mid-1980s.

that I read in relation to this issue was Zhong Baihua's *Essays on Aesthetics (Meixue sanbu)*. Since Zhong was a philosopher, this book was not particularly about architecture, but rather about ancient Chinese arts, including poetry, painting, calligraphy, architecture, etc., and their differences from the 'western' arts in artistic conception.²¹ Some of his points, for example, that 'western' arts represented the conflict between subject and object/nature (*wuwo duili*) whilst Chinese arts stressed their integration (*wuwo ronghe*), could be found in many architectural articles and discussions. At that time, the 'harmony of heaven (nature) and Man' (*tianren heyi*) was a widely respected Chinese tradition, which could be seen embodied in the arrangement of the courtyard house, the employment of wooden structures, and the building forms, components and ornaments. But *feng shui* was cautiously and partially accepted. I did not know anything about it until I listened to a lecture on the ancient mausoleums of China in the Third Year.²² Even then, *feng shui* was taken as an aspect of environmental science and a design principle. The part that related to everyday practice was condemned as 'feudal superstition' (*fengjian meixin*) and abandoned.²³ The causes that lay behind this situation were themselves quite complicated and are beyond the scope of this thesis. My point is that in

²¹ Zhong, Baihua (1981). Zhong's *Essays on Aesthetics* was quite influential at that time, and his points were widely spread.

²² The lecture was given by Wang Qiheng. Wang is Professor of History and Theory of Chinese Architecture at the School of Architecture, Tianjin University. He is one of the first scholars to advocate architectural research into *feng shui*.

²³ When I first encountered *feng shui* practice in Shenzhen and the requirements of clients, I neither understood nor accepted it. Gradually, I learnt practical knowledge of *feng shui* from them, and found that it was quite different from what had been talked about in academic circles, although they shared some principles. In the last ten years, the practice of *feng shui* and its practical account become more and more popular. But, officially, *feng shui* has not been openly talked about except either in the name of preserving traditional culture or in terms of academic research taking a 'scientific' viewpoint.

reality, the pursuit of the 'Chinese character' in architecture was not to conserve or rescue 'traditional' culture as a whole, as the 'traditions' were already selected and constructed.²⁴

When I look back at my university training, what I learnt was to design a building rather than particularly a 'Chinese' building. In my four years at undergraduate school, only two courses were directly linked to this issue: the History of Chinese Architecture in the Second Semester of the Second Year, and the project of the Museum of Vernacular Architecture (sixteen projects in total) in the Fourth Year's design studio. In some schools, students adopted the practice of surveying an ancient Chinese building (*gujian cehui*) under the guidance of teachers. My school did not have one at that time. We had watercolour practice in the countryside (Huaxi in Yunnan Province), which indeed had a distinct natural scenery, local customs and vernacular buildings. But the purpose of this practice was not to understand how vernacular construction was integrated with local culture, but rather to cultivate artistic taste and to train representational skills. In daily conversation, we talked more about the 'western modern' architecture – the architects, projects and theories – than ancient Chinese architecture. Throughout the whole course of training, unless there were specific requirements, students were usually free to choose any style, expression or model, none of which were necessarily 'Chinese'. Moreover, the principle of designing a 'vernacular style' building in Chongqing was not actually very different from designing one in Xi'an, or

²⁴ Chapter Two will give a detailed analysis of how 'Chinese characteristic architecture' was constructed and how this pursuit was legitimated through the twentieth century.

any other place. From my point of view, pursuing 'Chineseness' was mainly associated with the identification of 'architecture' as both a representation of culture and an art-form – which were more than a mere question of 'building technology' –, and somehow a 'politically correct' line. In effect, to many students, to make a reference to Chinese 'tradition' – such as the relationship between *yin and yang*, *qigong*, harmony of nature and Man, 'vernacular' life style, etc. – was a way of imbuing their projects with a certain degree of 'theoretical' depth, meaning and uniqueness.

The Problems of 'Translation' and 'Evidence'

The central problem that I met in studying at the AA and in my research is 'translation'. This problem was basically entangled with three issues: the difficulty of 'translating' architectural concepts; the form of interpreting architectural history, and the view of architectural theory. In consequence, these three issues lead to a crucial matter that the thesis deals with – the 'evidence'.

The first and major difficulty of studying at the AA was the problem of 'understanding'. However, this was not simply a problem of 'language' in a linguistic sense. At the beginning, it seemed to be the poverty of my English. However, while my English was improved in relation to the external world, it got worse when I was at the AA. Literally I could recognise the words in English, but when they were used in architectural context, I found it difficult to understand what the 'reference'

was.

In 2004, Huang Xiaojang, a graduate of the AA Design Research LAB (DRL), published his DRL projects in a bilingual edition – Chinese and English – in China. I wrote a glossary for his book to explain what a group of words meant – such as *programme*, *infrastructure*, *surface*, *responsive*, *scenario*, *diagram*, *mapping*, etc. –, because when he tried to translate his own work, he found that a number of terms were ‘untranslatable’. On the one hand, in English, these words indicated their own specific meanings in both the general architectural context and his particular projects. All the same, they were hardly used in the context of Chinese architecture at that time. We agreed that the ‘literal translation’ did not make sense to Chinese architects and architectural students. For instance, ‘programme’ was a common term at the AA, but its literal translation *chengxu* had not appeared in architectural discussions in China. The difference between ‘programme’ and ‘function’ in architectural discourse was not very clear to Chinese readers. Indeed, neither the English dictionary nor the English-Chinese dictionary seemed adequate enough to help us with the references of the term, and I guess its meaning might not be clearly discernible to ordinary English readers either. For me, writing this glossary was part of the process of overcoming the difficulties and constituting an early exercise in trying to translate architectural concepts from English into Chinese. Nonetheless, as the research goes on, instead of solving the problem, the problem grows. When I first came to

the UK and started this research, I faced one problem – the ‘translation’ of ‘western architecture’ and English terms into a Chinese-speaking context. Now I faced two problems – the complexity of the translations between the two architectural cultures.

With regard to the complexity of ‘translation’, let us look at two examples. The first term is ‘representation’, which was the first difficult term that I met with. This may sound a bit strange for an English-speaking architect, because ‘representation’ must be one of the most common terms that are used in daily conversations and theoretical writings. But it is not at all common in Chinese architecture. I faced three difficulties of understanding it. The first was literal translation. Literally, *zaixian* should be the most proper Chinese term for ‘representation’.²⁵ But in actual translation, several words, such as *biaoda*, *biaoxian*, *tixian*, *xiangzheng*, *juxiang*, *fanying* and *biaoshi*, are often used.²⁶ These words in fact cut across various meanings but are, nevertheless, interchangeable in general use. Amongst the meaning this term encompasses ‘presentation’, ‘symbolisation’, ‘embodiment’, ‘reflection’ and ‘indication’. This is not a question of ‘accuracy’ – one word is more appropriate than the others. Rather, it means that ‘representation’ in Chinese translation does not stick to the specific sense of one thing standing for something else. The second difficulty is that although I knew this meaning of

²⁵ *zaixian* (再现).

²⁶ *biaoda* (表达), *biaoxian* (表现), *tixian* (体现), *xiangzheng* (象征), *juxiang* (具像化), *fanying* (反映) and *biaoshi* (表示).

'representation', it was unclear to me just how it was used and what kind of things it referred to in the context of architecture. In English architectural discourse, 'representation' can refer to a range of things, which include rendering, plan, elevation, sketch and model. However, in Chinese, it specifically means rendering (*biaoxian* / *biaoxian tu*). In addition, *moxing* (building model) and *tu* (drawing) are never put together under one umbrella.²⁷ The situation becomes more complicated, when 'diagram' is introduced. In contemporary English architectural discourse, 'diagram' is intentionally differentiated from 'representation', but in Chinese architecture, *tubiao* / *tushi* (diagram) is taken as one type of *tu* just as rendering is.²⁸ At this point it becomes clear that this problem leads to the emergence of the third difficulty – the category that the concept indicates. In English-speaking context, 'representation' or 'representational' is a key concept that relates to the differentiation of neo-classicism, 'modernism' and 'postmodernism'. But in Chinese-speaking context, it makes no such indication, since 'representation' is a quite loose term, and has not established itself as a strong concept as it has in English.

The second was 'western modern' (*xifang xiandai*). Readers may have noticed that this phrase has already appeared several times in this introduction, and we will discuss how it was used and what it indicated in twentieth century Chinese

²⁷ Tu as a category includes *biaoxian tu*, or *xiaoguo tu* (rendering), *jianzhutu* (plan, elevation and section) and *caotu* (sketch). *tu* (图), *biaoxian tu* or *xiaoguo tu* (表现图, 效果图), *jianzhutu* (建筑制图——平、立、剖), *caotu* (草图) and *moxing* (模型).

²⁸ *tubiao* / *tushi* (图表 / 图小).

architecture in more detail in Chapter One. When I unconsciously kept using this phrase at the AA's PhD seminar, my tutors and classmates looked puzzled. They did not quite understand what I was talking about. For them, the formulation of the phrase seemed awkward, and the 'references' of it were unclear, because English architectural discourse does not have any such concept as the 'western modern'. However, it is a term that has been extensively used in Chinese architecture, and this translation retains the literal formulation of the Chinese term.

In the context of Chinese architecture, 'western modern' is a broad umbrella which covers a range of 'imports' from European and American architecture since the early twentieth century. The term could be used to refer to eclecticism, 'modernism', 'postmodernism', neo-'rationalism', 'Deconstructive architecture', etc. But the 'west' – in this case, Europe and the USA – itself lacks the category of 'western modern' architecture; instead it only has individual categories, such as eclectic architecture, 'modernist' architecture, 'postmodernist' architecture, etc. As was the case with the translation of 'representation', this is not a simple question of 'specificity', but instead indicates the operation of several different categories across different architectural discourses.

Through such kind of experiences, I realised that what I had to learn was not English but architectural English, not language but discourse. That is to say, the difficulties that I faced were to do with the asymmetry between the Chinese and English

architectural discourses. This does not imply that Chinese are unable to understand English discourse spontaneously, but rather that they systematically misread it. The attempt of this thesis is to explore what these 'misreadings' actually are. One way of reading this thesis is that it is my attempt to come to terms with the difficulties.

Now let us move to the second issue – the form of writing architectural history. At the AA, I experienced a quite different conception of 'history' from what I was used to. In the First Term of my first year, I joined the seminar 'Narratives of Modernism' from the 1920s to 1960s. It was very different from the way in which architectural history was taught in my training in China, as it was neither constructed on the basis of dogmatic periodization, nor a single narrative, but rather relied upon a group of potential narratives. Some of the books on the reading list, such as Le Corbusier's *Towards A New Architecture*, Bruno Zevi's *The Modern Language of Architecture* and Pevsna's *Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Walter Gropius*, I had already read. However, most of them, such as Hitchcock and Johnson's *The International Style*, Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture*, Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Aldo Rossi's *The Architecture of the City* and Tafuri's *Theories and History of Architecture*, I had not heard of, or had not read.²⁹ Apparently, there were many things absent from my knowledge, for instance, how 'international

²⁹ Some of the books were published in the last seven years. Aldo Rossi's *The Architecture of the City* was translated into Chinese and published in 2006. Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* and Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* have not seemed to be translated and published so far. Appendix 3 of this thesis lists the translated architectural books published in China from the 1980s to the 1990s.

style' was produced, and where the difference between 'international style' and 'modernism' lay. As a consequence, the history of 'modernism' became both richer and more complex for me. Nonetheless, more than the actual content itself, I was struck by the question of what the 'real' history was. The narratives often chose different evidences to support their arguments. Even when they were based upon the same 'facts', they could still have different or even opposite viewpoints. By the middle of the term, I was completely confused. But through this course and others in the 'Histories and Theories' Programme, I gradually learnt that there was no such thing as a 'neutral' history and that the 'histories' reflected particular values. This conception of 'history' fundamentally challenged what I had been taught in China, where 'history' was understood as the objective documentation of 'truths' and a chronological progress determined by social and technological development.³⁰

The way in which the English texts interpreted and constructed the history of twentieth century architecture was very different, too. In China, historical studies usually took two forms of representation. In general, the representation of architectural development adhered to the schemes of political periodization. For instance, the general history of architecture was normally divided into periods that corresponded to the 'primitive', 'slave', 'feudal', 'capitalist' and 'socialist' epochs of society. Chinese architecture in the twentieth century was periodized into two parts by the year 1949, which was when socialist China was

³⁰ I am sure that readers will know more about this from the discussion of Section 1.3, which is about historical studies in Chinese universities.

established. In accordance, architectural development was represented by the change of styles driven by the progress of technologies and techniques and by the changes in society. An individual architect's contributions were normally regarded as being in conformity with these broad changes. Of course, there were a number of more specific studies on the activities of certain groups, institutions and individual architects. But there was no narrative that was based upon a succession from one genius architect to another. This was not simply a way of representing Marxism, as many researches in the 1980s and 1990s were not directly linked to Marxist orthodoxy. Instead, they relate to forms of historical representation, and probably more importantly to official ideologies that stress that individuals are reflections and products of their social relations.

By contrast, the architectural development of the twentieth century in the English texts is accounted for either in the form of the heroic narrative of one genius being succeeded by another, such as Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture – A Critical History* or Alan Colquhoun's *Modern Architecture*; or in a critical succession of different schools with distinctive figures, such as Reyner Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*. Either way, the narratives are organised around individual architects. This does not necessarily mean that Chinese way of representing the history opposes to the historiography of western writers, but literally it opposes to the genre of architectural history. The idea of one genius handing the battle of architectural inspiration to another genius is not so much the

dogmatic conviction of western architectural historians, but has remained an important mode of representation of the presentation of architectural history. That is to say, these two forms of representing history may not be the problem in themselves, but they do show that the one of composing the history in the English texts cannot be simply applied to Chinese architecture in the twentieth century. In this thesis, the way of organising the narrative itself reflects architectural situation in China, and, indeed, is part of its central argument.

The third issue is about how theoretical research is conducted. In the preceding section, I mentioned that in contrast to the practicality displayed in Chinese architecture, the works of philosophers were often a form of established authority in research projects. A general way of doing an architectural research in China is to take a philosophy's viewpoint – whether it is Marxist materialism, structuralism or post-colonialism – as a basis and a starting point to frame architectural problems, to analyse them and in turn to confirm the philosophical proposition. This kind of account may be systematic to some extent, but it is unclear how it links to architecture. My experience at the AA was the opposite. At the beginning, I thought that the courses of the 'Histories and Theories' would be very philosophical. Surprisingly, all of the courses were very 'architectural'. This is not the question of whether philosophy is or is not 'useful'. But for its concern, architectural research needs to formulate its own question(s) by looking through materials and is driven by the question(s) on the basis of

reading through the 'facts'. One example of my experience was Roland Barthes's *Mythologies*. I knew semiotics when I was in China, and in my Master's dissertation I used semiotics as framework to justify the cultural meanings that architecture signified. But this time reading Barthes was different. What I learnt from Barthes's analysis was to read the 'objects' in detail and to link their organisation to a broader context. For the central question of this research – whether the Chinese references were reproductions of 'western architecture' – I tried to look at how the 'imported' objects were constructed architecturally, which involved examining the employment of materials, the relationship between components and objects, the design methods used to compose them, the location in space, etc.; how they were used and associated with different activities in daily life, commercial exchange, city administration and political strategies; and how they were interpreted in a Chinese context, both culturally and historically. On the basis of these readings, the arguments of the thesis were built up. Therefore, the main task of this research is not to demonstrate a philosophical proposition, but to search, read and interpret the 'facts', i.e. to construct and provide legitimate 'evidence'.

Indeed, nothing is more crucial than 'evidence' in this thesis. This thesis does not pretend to name a distinct methodology, but rather its task is to clarify the issues and to provide readers with the form of architectural 'translation'. In doing so, I have tried to document as many Chinese sources as possible to support my arguments. Most of these Chinese sources have not

appeared in English documents so far. For instance, in the chapter concerning the China Central Television HQ project in Beijing, Chinese views in the debate have not been heard outside China. More generally, I have deliberately quoted from various resources: the writings of Chinese architects and architectural historians, Chinese textbooks, official documents, newspapers and advertisements. I also conducted informal interviews which I present not as systematic evidence, but to show a range of opinions that are possible in China.

'Translation' is central to making the 'evidence' and arguments of the thesis intelligible. Yet, as showed above, 'translation' itself is a complex issue. This thesis adopts three forms of 'translation' to deal with this issue. The first one is 'actual translation', which is governed by clarity and the fact of comprehension. The meanings of the terms of this type, such as 'national style', 'formal resemblance', etc., deviate little between English and Chinese. The second is more difficult. Some terms may be translated well in the first sense, but are not symmetrical in their connotation. This thesis tries to indicate this as far as possible, for example, 'architecture' (pp. 78), 'luxury' (pp. 198-199) and 'avant-garde' (pp. 278-281). The most difficult and important one is the Chinese terms that are not translated in the proper formation of English, such as 'western modern' and 'structural-ism'. This is what may be called 'literal translation', not because it is the 'real' translation, but to mark out that it is still 'unreadable' in English. To retain such 'literal translation' may seem to be awkward to an English reader. But

indeed it is my intention. I have deliberately kept the formulations of Chinese in order to underline the need for further 'translation' and more detailed glosses. In addition, for the convenience of readers who wish to check the 'translations' given in the thesis, the original Chinese texts of the quotations are provided in footnotes and the keywords in three versions – English, *pinyin* and Chinese – are available in footnotes and Appendix 8: Glossary.

While this thesis is written as a PhD, and while it may be addressed English readers in order to clarify the relation of 'western' architecture to China, it is really directed to Chinese students. I hope that this thesis is in the end able to help Chinese students make a quicker and more efficient understanding of the relationship between the two architectural cultures. For the continuity of this research, I have co-organised a collaborating research project on 'Anglo-Chinese Conceptual Translation in Architecture', which was initiated by Mark Cousins, the Director of the 'Histories and Theories' Programme of the AA, and who continues to lead it, and Professor Tong Huiming, the Head of Design College of the Guangdong Academy of Fine Arts. It is our ambition that the research will provide practical tools for architects and architectural students who come cross over from the two different architectural cultures, and reliable and useful resources for academic discussions and further researches.

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Chapter One

The 'Western Modern' and Conceptual Translation in Twentieth-century Chinese Architecture

An English reader will probably wonder why the title of this chapter includes the phrase 'western modern'. In English, it is an obscure phrase, whose meaning is unclear to the English reader. However, the phrase is used because it is a literal translation of a Chinese category that will help us to understand the problem of **conceptual translation** as opposed to linguistic translation, something that must be confronted by anyone concerned to understand Chinese discourse on architecture.

To use the phrase 'western modern' raises the questions: what does the 'western modern' mean in the Chinese cultural and architectural context? How does the concept 'modern' operate in accounting for 'imports' from Europe and the USA? What kind of relationship does it indicate between the 'imports' and Chinese architecture? Is Chinese architecture a reproduction of them? Or, if it is not, how can we characterise the differences?

This chapter addresses these questions by examining the role that the category of the 'modern' occupies in socio-cultural discourses and architectural discussions in twentieth century China. This itself involves two distinct but interrelated problems – the difference between the Chinese signification of the term 'modern' and its European use, and secondly the content of the Chinese use. As will be argued, the Chinese use of the term 'modern' is different from the European use. The Chinese use of the term is much more distinctive. It is mostly organised around the idea of importation and aspirations for the future. By contrast, the European use is much more general, and usually its meaning depends upon its context. The second relates to the content of the category or rather its capacity to exclude other categories. As will become clear, one of the central characteristics of the use of the category of the 'modern' in Chinese is that in the architectural context, it seems to exclude any distinct reference to what in Europe would be called 'modernism' -- the sweeping change in architecture and in architectural theory that historians date at around 1920, and with which architects, such as Le Corbusier and Mies van de Rohe, are associated.

In China, the blanket term 'modern' and or more usually 'western modern' abolishes the distinctiveness of 'modernism' as a historical turning point in architectural history. As a consequence, we are dealing not only with asymmetry of categories, but one which in China represses the historiographical significance of 'modernism'. 'Western modern' is simply a series of importations from the 'west', all of which have a kind of architectural equivalence. They may have been insistence to the European that there would seem to be 'modernist' building. But its status in China is as a stylistic variation of other examples of 'western modern'.

Central to the argument of entire thesis is that Chinese architectural history in the twentieth century up to the contemporary period is characterised by a continuing absence of 'modernism' and its discourse. 'Western modern' refers simply to a series of imports since the nineteenth century. These are interpreted in China in terms of the category of 'western modern', which we will elaborate later. What is important to recognise at this point is not simply that China has a different history from Europe and the USA, but that its system of interpretation of 'western' architecture is quite different from 'western' interpretations of 'western' architecture. This latter point is just important for the thesis as the former one. Thus, whenever the Chinese talked about 'western modern' architecture, they always were referring to imports which were subject to their own classification and interpretation. This point is central to understanding what to a European eye would seem to be a continuous eclecticism of architecture. At a methodological level, it should seem that this argument is based not on some global comparison of Chinese and 'western' architecture -- which we find neither useful or intelligible --, but upon the mapping of different forms of perception. 'Western modern' refers to a system of importation and use whose terms are purely Chinese and must be explained historically in terms of emergence of the category of 'western modern'.

Compared with English, Chinese had no distinct concepts for 'modernity' and 'modernism' in its own culture, and operated with a singular notion of the 'modern' (*xiandai*). To say this, it does not mean that Chinese had no literal words for modernity (*xiandaixing*) and modernism (*xiandai zhuiyi*) in a linguistic sense, but they did not operate as different categories as in English, and their concepts were largely confined to a European and American reference.¹ Indeed, 'Chinese modernity' is more raised in recent scholarship, mainly by overseas scholars, as a counterpart to 'western modernity', in order to characterise modernisation and its attendant ideologies in China. However, within domestic writings and discussions, 'modernity' or 'Chinese modernity' was not widely used until the beginning of the twenty-first century. To some people, 'modernity' was a new or alternative version of the 'modern'. In the meantime, the lack of 'modernism' and 'modernity' did not prevent the promotion of 'postmodernism' and even 'post-modernity' in the domain of contemporary Chinese culture. In order to understand this, we have to look at how the category 'modern' operated in a Chinese context, although the term itself was originally translated from English and French.

1.1 The 'Modern' and the Problematic of the 'Western'

As a concept, 'modern' functions as an entity and category in political, social and cultural discourse. According the *Cihai*, an

¹ Modern (*xiandai*, *modeng*) (现代, 摩登); modernity (*xiandaixing*) (现代性); modernism (*xiandai zhuiyi*) (现代主义).

authoritative Chinese dictionary, 'modern' had at least three direct applications – historical periodisation, temporal description and cultural activity.

1. The epoch of imperialism and proletarian revolution. In history it generally refers to the period when capitalism exists and the proletariat carries through socialist revolution. [Therefore] the Russian Revolution of October 1917 may be regarded as the beginning of modern world history. It is generally understood that China's modern history begins with the May Fourth Movement in 1919 (which begins the period of the New Democratic Revolution);² it is also suggested that it [the Modern History of China] begins with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. 2. The present. 3. A literary journal, [which] published a number of influential works in the 1930s.³

Beyond this, 'modern' has plenty of other associated terms, which have been used to cover all socio-cultural aspects, such as 'modernisation', 'modern culture', 'modern consciousness', 'modern Chinese language', 'modern sociology', 'modern industry', 'modern literature', etc.

Before examining the operation of the term 'modern' in different fields, and in order to discern its nature in a Chinese context, it is also necessary to look at the notion of 'western' which is often associated with the 'modern'. 'Modern' (*xiandai*) was originally translated from English and a Japanese-European loanword

² The May Fourth Movement, which is also called 'Chinese enlightenment', was both a political and a cultural movement. It was initiated by intellectuals and students with the objective of opposing imperialism and feudalism in 1919. Because it became associated with the 'new cultural movement', the May Fourth Movement had a profound effect upon Chinese intellectual culture. Along with promoting 'democracy' (Mr. De) and 'science' (Mr. Sai), Marxism was introduced into China from the Soviet Union during the May Fourth, and later on became the theoretical basis for the Chinese revolution against the Nationalist regime. Historically, the Nationalist revolution led by Sun Yat-sen, which aimed at toppling the imperial regime, is called the 'old democratic revolution', and the revolution led by the CCP in terms of Marxism is described as the 'new democratic revolution'.

³ Cihai (1989), pp. 3155. "1. 即帝国主义和无产阶级革命的时代。历史学上通常指资本主义存在和无产阶级进行社会主义革命的时代。1917年俄国十月社会主义革命可作为世界现代历史的开端。一般认为,中国现代历史始于1919年五四运动(进入新民主主义革命时期),亦有主张始于1949年中华人民共和国成立者。2. 现在这一时代。3. 文学刊物。三十年代初曾发表过许多有影响的创作。"

and entered into Chinese usage in the 1920s, when a series of movements were launched to transform the country.⁴ It is not only the linguistic origin of the term which makes the meaning of 'modern' semantically linked to the 'western', but also in its use, the word 'western' has been implicitly or explicitly used as a reference, standard and articulation of the 'modern'. However, the notion of the 'western' is itself problematic. Its definition varies in the fields of geography, politics, economy, social structure and culture.

In terms of official definition, the 'western' was not a geographical but a political concept in China. According to the *Cihai*, the western countries were

[...] generally the developed capitalist countries, such as America, Britain, France, Japan, Australia, etc. It is a political rather than a geographic concept. Because historically capitalist countries first emerged in the west, they are called [western].⁵

This definition contrasts with the notion of 'Oriental' that Edward Said discussed. To Said, a geographical designation has been an entity for the whole 'Orientalist' discourse. But in the political discourse of China, there is no such an entity. The notion 'western' is a more abstract and ideological construction. This political definition of the 'western' encounters problems of recognition, as sometimes it also contradicts itself. The obvious case is Japan, which is politically designated as 'western' but is geographically and culturally regarded as 'eastern'. The Soviet Union is another problematic case, which was politically

⁴ Liu, Lydia H. (1996).

⁵ Cihai (1989). "泛指资本主义发达国家。如美国、英国、法国、日本、澳大利亚等国。是政治概念，不是地理概念。但历史上资本主义国家首先在西方出现，故名。"

'socialist' but culturally 'western'. In 2000, Zhang Yaozeng, a Chinese architect who was selected to study in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, recalled:

As well as emphasising the special expectations of the Party and People concerning our cultivation, the preparatory briefing to welcome the new students [destined for the Soviet Union] also informed us for the first time of some of the things we had to know about if we wanted to go to the Soviet Union, enjoining us to pay attention to the different situation between the 'inside' and the 'outside', which we had to engrave in our hearts, so that we were neither to accept the other side nor adapt or lose immunity to it. [We were told that] the ethics and customs of the Soviet Union were very different from ours. Even under the leadership of Stalin, there were a lot of negative aspects. For instance, the Soviet Party and the [political] activities within the party were different from ours. Our overseas students should not accept the influence of the Soviet Party: in their society, the black-market and hidden prostitution existed, and relations between men and women were unregulated, their students cheated in exams and cohabited outside of marriage. The decadent contemporary western culture had had an effect there. In short, [we should] be mentally alert to the Soviet Union: we were sent there to study their science and technology rather than their politics and life style.⁶

Zhang's recollection exposed the ambivalence of the political differentiation. According to him, under the auspicious name of 'socialism', the material amenities, which the 'western' countries had and China lacked, were appreciated and enthusiastically learnt. The socio-cultural aspects, which threatened Chinese morality, social conduct and political ideology, were rejected as 'western'. The contradiction between the official definition and the actual accounts undermines the idea that there is any consistent content in the category 'western'. The 'western' is a

⁶ Zhang, Yaozeng (2000). pp. 162. "记得进预备部听到的迎新报告中除了强调党和人民对我们的培育和特殊的殷切期望外,第一次听到要去苏联必须让我们知道的一些情况,并嘱咐要注意内外有别,只能记在心中,不致到了那边会不适应或丧失免疫抵抗力。我们去的苏联,就民族和乡土人情而言与我们十分不同,即使在斯大林领导下的苏联,那时已有不少负面的东西。诸如苏联的党及党内生活与我们就不同,我们留学生不能接受苏联党的影响,他们社会上有黑市、暗娼,男女生活作风也随便,学生中考试舞弊、男女同居,滥交也不是少数,现在西方堕落文化在那里已有影响。一句话,对苏联脑子里要有一根筋,我们被派去那里主要是学习他们的科学技术,不是学他们的那一套政治和生活方式。"

generalised concept that is set up in opposition to China, which is designated politically as 'socialist', geographically as 'eastern', economically as 'developing' and culturally as 'Chinese'.

This kind of generalised opposition not only exists in political discourse, but also in intellectual circles, academic discussion, journalistic reporting and daily usage. In 1934, Lu Xūn, a leading figure of the leftist writers of the time, put forward an influential idea 'appropriation-ism' (*nalai zhuyi*).⁷ The short article has been widely circulated since the time it was published. From then onwards, it has been reprinted in the course of continuous publications of his collected works, in anthologies, in school textbooks, and in citations of other authors. In the article, Lu Xūn satirised the fear of importation, and argued for active 'appropriation' rather than passive 'acceptance'. He advocated:

We must take. We must either use, or store, or demolish. And then, the owner will be a new owner. The house will become a new house. [...] Without appropriation, people cannot become new on their own. Without appropriation, literature and art cannot become new on its own.⁸

Lu Xūn did not directly use the term 'western'. But the matters to which he referred from England, Germany, France, America and Japan fitted a common understanding of the 'western' in China. Lu Xūn's viewpoint was pragmatic. What he was

⁷ 'Appropriation-ism' (*nalai zhuyi*) (拿来主义).

⁸ Lu Xūn (1934) Appropriation-ism, in *Qiejieting Essays*. “我们要拿来。我们要或使用，或存放，或毁灭。那么，主人是新主人，宅子也就会成为新宅子。然而首先要这人沉着，勇猛，有辨别，不自私。没有拿来的，人不能自成为新人，没有拿来的，文艺不能自成为新文艺。” The metaphors in his writing are familiar to many Chinese people, i.e. the house as the country, the owner as Chinese people, etc. Lu Xūn played a profound role in the formation of Chinese intellectual culture, especially leftist literature. Since 1949, promoted by Mao Zedong and the CCP, his thoughts have been appropriated by the orthodox ideology.

concerned with was not the origin of the things, but rather the things which did not exist in Chinese tradition and reality, and which were useful to renew the Chinese people, Chinese culture and the Chinese nation.

We can see that the 'western' as a Chinese concept is a complex construction. In order to understand it fully, one must understand that the term 'modern' whenever it is used, means we must go beyond a purely semantic definition of the term. In a way, it parallels the complex construction used in Europe and the USA when referring to the 'east'. The 'east' is not just an adjective. It is a category, as Edward Said has shown, which encapsulates a whole philosophical and ideological tradition. In the same way, the Chinese category of the 'western' refers to such a complex set of conditions.

1.2 The Category of the 'Modern' in the Chinese Contexts

1.2.1 The 'Modern' in Socio-political Discourse

The discussion in the last section has pointed out that the Chinese notion of the 'western' is a part of being 'modern'. This section will look at how the concept 'modern' operates in the political agenda and mass culture of twentieth century China in terms of 'modernisation'. In doing so, it immediately relates to the concept 'new', which can be found in Lu Xūn's proposal and which has been often associated with ideas of the 'modern'. In general usage, 'new' and 'modern' indicate social and cultural transition in China. To be 'new', to move away from tradition and

to depart from the immediate past have all been the tasks of a national project - 'modernisation'. Of course, the 'new' and the 'modern' are not necessarily always everywhere and in every time identical. But in general, 'modern' implies things that are new, and which relate to the 'western' as opposed to Chinese tradition.

As a social and political project, 'modernisation' as a national project was elevated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), proceeding from a series of 'new' proposals dating from the late Qing Dynasty until the regime of the Guomindang. The term 'modern' appeared shortly after the Chinese intellectual enlightenment of the May Fourth movement in 1919 – about sixty years after the first reforming project, the 'foreign matters movement', was promoted by Qing bureaucrats. For nearly a century, beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the 'new', which had referred to European and American knowledge, was used by either reformists or revolutionaries to propose different and opposite positions to the imperial and Nationalist systems. In 1860, a series of internal crises and external failures in the military led to the 'foreign matters movement', which intended to strengthen the imperial regime by employing imported technologies and engineering. 'New learning' (*xinxue*) – which was also called 'western learning' (*xixue*) – was urged for this purpose.⁹ In 1898, the emperor

⁹ The phrase 'Western learning as utility, Chinese learning as essence', which was put forward by a high official Zhang Zhidong in the 1860s, has been widely quoted to illustrate the Chinese idea of social reform and modernisation. Though the differentiation of 'utility' and 'essence' is arguable in terms of the nature of Chinese modernisation, the idea at least explicates the hybridisation of social and cultural transformation in China since the second half of the 19th century.

Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty issued a political reform – the 'new politics' (*xinzheng*) – in order to maintain imperial power by adopting constitutional norms. In 1934, in response to 'chaos' in China, the Nationalist government launched a social movement called the 'New Life Movement', which was advocated by the head of the Guomindang, Chiang Kai-shek. This movement attempted to 'lead to the social regeneration of China' by preserving traditional Confucianism in 'a new national consciousness and mass psychology'.¹⁰ The causes and consequences of the marriage of the 'old' and the 'new' are historically complicated. But what I want to point out is that the 'new' agenda, which called for the reform of the existing structures and conventions and for moving towards the future, in fact, neither completely broke away from the 'old', nor was identical to the 'importation' in its original context.

After the CCP came to power in 1949, the term 'new' frequently featured in communist propaganda i.e. 'new society', 'new epoch', 'new people', etc, in order to distinguish the 'new' regime from the previous one. 'Modernisation' was constantly promoted under the different leaderships at critical moments for the nation in the transition from a traumatic past to the future.

The 'Four Modernisations', which set up a national objective at the end of the twentieth century, was first suggested by Mao Zedong and was put forward by Zhou Enlai in the Government Report of 1964, – three years after the 'natural disaster' which

¹⁰ Spence, Jonathan E. (1999). pp. 356.

took place from 1959 to 1961.¹¹ The nationwide famine, which resulted from the failure of the 'Great Leap Forward' in 1958 and was intensified by the Sino-Soviet rift, caused enormous mortalities and economic retrogression.¹² Scepticism concerning the leadership of the CCP spread, and although repressed, threatened political stability. In 1978, two years after the 'Cultural Revolution', the target of the 'Four Modernisations' was raised again by Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping. Ten years of political movements and 'class struggle' had exhausted the nation, which was in deep crisis in terms of social relationships, economic development and culture. The proposal of 'modernisation' embodied a shift in the focus of governmental policy from 'political struggle' to economic development. At the social level, its implementation was about re-establishing public confidence and preventing criticism of the past dragging society back into chaos. In 1992, the new leader of the CCP and Central Government Jiang Zeming reinforced the commitment to modernisation and Deng's strategies by advocating to 'speed up Reform and Opening up' in the country.¹³ It was three years after the 'Tian'anmen Affair', which manifested the conflict existing between the political and administrative system, on the one hand, and the pressure of economic development and social aspiration, on the other. The Reform policy, which had engendered the rapid development of the economy, faced the dilemma and the nation was struggling to move beyond and to

¹¹ At that time, the objective of the 'Four Modernisations' was: to achieve the modernisations of agriculture, industry, national defence and science and technology by the end of the twentieth century.

¹² Spence, Jonathan E. (1999), pp. 544-564.

¹³ In October 1992, the Fourteenth Congress of CCP was held in Beijing. On behalf of the Central Committee, Jiang Zeming gave a speech entitled 'Speeding up Reform and Opening up and Modernisation, Obtaining More Success for Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'.

overcome the obstacles.

From the Qing Dynasty to the Communist regime, both the 'new' proposals and 'modernisation' projects were consistently promoted under different leaderships with the aim of reforming the country and leading the nation to 'modernity'. As the 'new' placed more stress on the difference between the present and the past, 'modernisation' has a vision of the future which functions as a 'forgetting' of the immediate past, a cure for reality, and the insistent nature of political power. Although the content varied from one instance to another, being 'modern' articulates a continuous aspiration for transition in the socio-political agenda.

In the history of China, the approach to, as well as the delineation and assessment of 'modernisation', was modified from time to time in correspondence to the conditions that existed at the time. However, in terms of the general objectives, standard and strategy, 'modernisation' has consistent attributes.

According to the official definition 'modernisation' is

a process and objective pertaining to an undeveloped society becoming a developed society. As a process, the first sign is the development of productive forces by advanced science and technology, the improvement of production and consumption, and the resulting changes in social structure and political ideology (which are represented by political democracy, rationality, the scientific spirit, social mobility and a modernized consciousness). As an objective, it generally suggests a level of advanced science and technology, advanced productive forces and consumption, with contemporary developed society acting as a reference. The trend towards modernisation started from the Second World War. There is no single model for the modernisation of different countries. Chinese modernisation is socialist modernisation with Chinese

characteristics.¹⁴

Two aspects are notable in this definition. First, 'modernisation' or being 'modern' above all privileges material improvement; or in Marxist terms, it aims to develop the forces of production. Second, it is an integrated mechanism that denies the independent formation of political constitutions, economic systems, social structures and cultural discourse, and reduces the complex relationship between them into one of achieving a single goal. This kind of homogeneity of the conception of 'modernisation' empowers China to take a different approach to it, which sets out from the reform of the political and economic system, and subsequently gives rise to 'modern forms' of social relationship and cultural custom. This integration seems to indicate that the 'modern' is also an inclusive category which contains both ideology and practice.

In the process of 'modernisation', imported 'things' became an object of desire which in itself articulates the standard of 'modern' life in Chinese mass culture. The quality of the 'modern' is often accounted for as 'novel' or 'fashionable', which in popular parlance is called *modeng*, a transliteration of the

¹⁴ Cihai (1999), pp.1847. “不发达社会成为发达社会的过程和目标。作为过程，其首要标志是用先进科学技术发展生产力，生产和消费水平不断提高，社会结构及政治意识形态也随之出现变化（其标志为社会民主，理性主义和科学精神、社会流动和现代化人格）。作为目标，它一般指以当代发达社会为参考系的先进科学技术水平、先进生产力及消费水平。现代化潮流起始于第二次世界大战后。各国现代化并无统一模式。中国的现代化是社会主义的现代化，具有中国特色。”

On another occasion, a different approach to modernisation is further explained. 'To economically underdeveloped countries, it [modernisation] means to accelerate the development of productive forces and their transformation into modern industrialised societies, to catch up with the developed countries as soon as possible, and then to adapt to the new reality and development environment of the world, by adopting effective means based on their own conditions, implementing strategic economic and technological reforms and considerable social reforms which meet the need for the development of productive forces.'

English *modern* or French *moderne*. The association of the 'foreign' or the 'western' with 'novelty' was not a seamless process. It took some eighty years to change perception from rejection, to recognition and finally to the desire for occupation, if the wholesale importation is dated back to the First Opium War of 1840. In studying the formation of the urban culture of Shanghai in the 1930s and 1940s, Leo Ou-fan Lee pointed out that the pursuit of novelty and fashion reflected Chinese fantasies about 'western' material civilisation:

These material aspects of Western modernity, according to Tang Zhenchang, a leading scholar on Shanghai history, proved easier to accept than the 'spiritual' aspects, and the response of Shanghai natives to these material forms of Western modernity followed a typical pattern of shock, wonder, admiration, and imitation.¹⁵

Imported architecture was one of the 'material forms of Western modernity'.¹⁶ It appeared in Chinese cities in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the construction of foreign concessions, in the 'new' form of urban fabric, municipal infrastructure, and of building types, styles and technologies. In the case of Shanghai, the 'western style' buildings, which were designed, built and occupied by the Europeans and Americans were despised by the Shanghainese in the early years.¹⁷ This attitude gradually changed. By the early decades of the twentieth century, the 'Western style' house had become a favoured type of dwelling. In 1933, a journalist from Shanghai recorded the fashion of the day:

When Chinese people move into a new western-style house, they

¹⁵ Lee, Leo Ou-fan (1999). pp. 6.

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 3-42.

¹⁷ Wu, Jiang (1997). pp. 22-25.

all light up with pleasure. Unless they encounter a major misfortune or the decline in the fortunes of their families, they will not move back into houses built in the old style. There is no doubt that the western-style house holds a very big attraction.¹⁸

The reasons why the Chinese were fascinated by the 'western style' house, were explained by the journalist as 'wide surrounding windows, the comfort of the storied building, the water supply basin, the lavatory, the bath and other facilities'. All these facilities provided 'convenience and cleanliness', and made it easy for 'the dwellers to get used to hygienic habits. So much was this the case that if they were allowed to move back to the former residence [the Chinese house], they would feel it incompatible.' In other words, no matter how diverse the building styles were, the distinct quality of the 'western style' house was dependent upon material amenities which accorded with modern evaluations of convenience, hygiene and comfort, and which the 'imported' houses shared in common, and in contrast, the Chinese house did not offer.¹⁹

More than the question of physical comfort, the 'western style' house embodied personal achievement and social status. Most of the Chinese who lived in the 'western style' houses were engaged in new occupations which did not exist in the traditional society: they were compradors, industrialists, educated professionals, and employees in finance, trade,

¹⁸ The word actually used means 'foreign-style' but this is usually equivalent to 'western-style'. Lai, Delin (1995), pp.51. "华人租住洋式房屋后, 欣欣然现得意之色, 此辈华人家庭, 当其由旧式住房迁至新式洋房时, 莫不欢悦相告, 喜形于色, 此后除非遇绝大变故, 或家况惨落外, 决不愿再迁入旧式住房, 殆无疑义, 以是可知洋式房屋, 实有甚大之吸引力。"

¹⁹ The point here is not whether Chinese house could or could not offer the convenience, hygiene and comfort in modern sense, but rather a change of conception and perception of living conditions and valuation. This kind of changing point can be found in many literatures at the time and thereafter. Chi, Li (1999). Yang, Nianqun (2001).

industry etc. In the new type of city, such as Shanghai, their identity, either personal or occupational, had little to do with the traditional forms of recognition in a society – kinship, locality and bureaucratic position. Economic strength played a greater part in the identification. In the late nineteenth century, a building which adopted a 'western style' could cost twenty times more than one employing a more traditional style in Shanghai.²⁰ Apart from the expense, the 'western style' lent a physical appearance to the new classes of power, wealth and success. Under these circumstances, it is of no surprise that possessing a 'western style' house signified personal progress at that time. In *Shanghai Modern*, Leo Ou-fan Lee has interpreted the psychological and social signification of the skyscraper during the 1920s and 1930s.²¹ Shanghai's skyscrapers, which were associated with the new Art Deco style and derived from the New York's prototypes, were raised after the neo-classicist edifices of the city. The way in which the skyline was renewed by its actual height somehow symbolised the shift of power from British to American dominance. When translated into local culture, their signification of the colonial imprint was correspondingly decreased. The skyscrapers were 'portrayed as showcasing socioeconomic inequality – the high and the low, the rich and the poor.' At this point, the imported style buildings became a physical embodiment of social class, and to some extent articulated the emergence of the Chinese bourgeois.

²⁰ 'When Shanghai Municipal Council decided to build a police station, someone once suggested using a Chinese style. But finally it was decided to adopt Western style which was more than twenty times more expensive than the Chinese style building.' Wu, Jiang (1997). pp. 25.

²¹ Lee, Leo Ou-fan (1999). pp.7-13.

What is interesting here is the category – the 'western style'. It seems that the category includes all architecture 'imported' from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Whether they were 'colonial style', neoclassical, Art Deco, art nouveau, English revival, or German neo-Nürnberg, their formal character was first of all its difference from the Chinese tradition, and hence 'foreign', 'new' and 'modern'. In effect, eclecticism was still a 'new' presence in contrast to traditional Chinese architecture, when 'modernism' was introduced as yet another fashion and style in the 1930s. Wu Jiang, an architectural historian from Shanghai, once commented:

To the Shanghai natives, the western revivalist architecture in Shanghai never represented a kind of conservative idea. On the contrary, it represented a new thing – its old style was newly imported. Because of this, when western modernist architecture entered into Shanghai, it did not contrast with the revivalist architecture, but only added one more modern style.²²

This comment lends support to the argument that the development of architecture in twentieth century China was dependent upon waves of importation from Europe and the USA. But it is crucial to understand that these waves did not necessarily come in the same order as they did in Europe and the USA. The most obvious fact here is that the Chinese never experienced a 'moment', either in the 1920s or afterwards, like that which in Europe led to the intense concern for architecture which preoccupied and inspired the likes of Le Corbusier and Mies van de Rohe. In other words, Chinese architecture never

²² Wu, Jiang (1997). "上海的西方复古建筑在上海人眼里从来就不代表一种保守的建筑观念,相反,它却是代表着一种新事物——它那古老的形式对上海人来说却是刚刚进来不久的新事物。正因为如此,当西方如火如荼的现代建筑波及上海的时候,并没有与"复古主义建筑思潮形成对立,而只是在许多西方建筑式样中又加了一种摩登式样而已。"

'experienced' what became known as 'modernism'. The history of the waves of importation has to be studied according to a chronology which is different from that of Europe. From the European point of view, it is characterised by the absence – the continuous – absence of 'modernism'. While in Europe and the USA, 'postmodernism' would be considered as something that occurred after a certain crisis of 'modernism', in China it is merely something that continues the 'modern'. The effects of this are complex and will appear time and time again in this thesis.

This results in a puzzling situation for the Chinese. While the imports were 'western' and 'modern', from a European or American perspective, they were neither. 'Western' architecture itself lacked the very notion of 'western modern' architecture. To those in Europe and America, they just had architecture, although it might stylistically be differentiated between neo-classical, revivalist or even something represented as a so called national style. What was important after the First World War was a self-conscious break with the past that was called 'modernism'. In China, by contrast, all the architecture from Europe and the USA was always already both 'modern' and 'western'. There was no room in this sense for the complete meaning of the category 'modernism', which became a specialist term for a certain style, but which never established itself as a pivotal category. From this, we come to the conclusion that there is a fundamental asymmetry between China on the one hand and Europe and the USA on the other.

1.2.2 The 'Modern' in Twentieth-century Chinese Architecture

In last section, we reached the conclusion that the concept 'modern' in China operates as a category which contains all imports of being kind of the 'other' to the political, social and economic agenda and daily life. These imports are not only embedded in the government agenda but are desired by the great mass of people in terms of the Chinese aspiration to be 'modern' – leaving the past, moving to the future and improving living standards. Nonetheless, the Chinese 'modern' is, and never has been, just a reproduction of the imports. In terms of architecture, there is no organised perception of 'modernism'. This section will continue the investigation into the architectural profession. We will argue that not only for the masses, but also for Chinese architects, the 'modern' has been seen as an integrated category to account for the imports from Europe and the USA throughout the twentieth century, from 'eclecticism', to 'modernism' and 'postmodernism', and will demonstrate the conceptual differences that exist between Chinese architecture and the imports.

In doing so, the central question should be: what does 'modern', as a category, mean in Chinese discourse on architecture? How to define 'modern' has been a problematic issue in historical writings, academic discussion and professional practice. The issue essentially points to two interrelated questions: how to define 'western' imports and how to identify the character of 'modern' Chinese architecture.

In writing the history of modern Chinese architecture, Zou Denong, an architectural historian, admitted to prefer the term 'modern architectural movement' in accounting for Chinese architecture in the twentieth century. He intentionally avoided using 'modernism' in his work, because for him, 'modernism' had different meanings in its broad and interdisciplinary applications. It not only was unable to cover all the 'modern' activities concerned with architecture across the world, but also often confused with 'International Style'.²³ By contrary, the term 'modern architecture', which was based upon industrialisation, contained new social programmes, as well as new architectural forms and new architectural types, which were in turn supported by new materials, technologies, design ideas and methods.²⁴ Under these conditions, the correspondence between architectural activities in China and those in the wider world was set up. However, the way in which the 'modern' is characterised is ambiguous. For instance, on the one hand, regarding industrialisation as a basis for the 'modern architectural movement', he included 'non-industrialised' and revivalist

²³ Zou, Denong (2001). pp.2.

²⁴ Zou's definition of the 'modern architectural movement' is influenced by L. Benevolo whose *History of Modern Architecture* is taken by Zou as a classic and a model for historical writing. Zou Denong is a professor in the School of Architecture of Tianjin University in China. In the 1980s and 1990s, he co-translated the *History of Western Modern Art* and the English version of the *History of Modern Architecture* by the Italian historian L. Benevolo into Chinese. The *History of Modern Architecture* was first published in Italian in 1960 and its English version was issued in 1971. The Chinese name of this book is the *History of Western Modern Architecture*, published by the Tianjin Science and Technology Press in 1996. Apart from these two translations, Zou has published a number of introductory articles on contemporary architecture in Europe and the USA, and comments and critiques on Chinese architecture. Since 1982, Zou has devoted himself to the history of Chinese architecture after 1949. In 1989, together with two other authors, he published the book *Outline of Modern Chinese Architecture 1949-1985*. In 1999, Zou co-edited the *Chinese Architecture in the Past 50 years: 1949-1999*. The content of these two books was partly included in *A History of Modern Chinese Architecture*. The objective of this book, as Zou put it, was to 'comprehensively and precisely represent historical truth'. Indeed, the book is the most comprehensive documentation of buildings in China from 1949 to 1999 so far. In terms of the content, it actually covers the history from the 1920s to 1990s.

buildings in the category of the 'modern', in terms of the supplement they provided to industrialisation, as an integral part of 'modern' consciousness, and the adoption of new structures, technologies, facilities and management techniques. On the other hand, he thought that 'revivalism' was contradictory to the 'modern':

During the time of 'learning' from the Soviet Union, the confrontation between so called 'ideas of socialist design' [which are regarded as instances of revivalist architecture by him] and 'ideas of capitalist design' (i.e. modern architectural thinking) indeed existed.²⁵

This contradictory account of revivalist architecture as well as the repression of the use of the term 'modernism' highlights the absence of 'modernist' discourse in twentieth century Chinese architecture. The application of the term 'modern' is done in order to make a contrast with 'traditional' Chinese architecture. This shows that 'western' architecture is understood differently as a concept from the way it is in Europe and the USA. So it is not a surprise to learn that in Zou's account, the truly eclectic Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum of 1925 and the highly contemporary National Grand Theatre of 1999 are both ascribed to the 'modern' category. In order to understand the complications, we need a certain historical investigation of Chinese architecture, which at least has a firm chronological basis.

Architecture as a profession in China started with the import of the 'Beaux-Arts' system in education, practice and academic research, mainly via America, in the 1920s. Chinese architects

²⁵ Zou, Denong (2001). pp. 5.

who received an architectural training abroad played a pivotal role in its formation. In the 1910s and 1920s, while 'modernism' was the issue in Europe, most Chinese architects were trained in America where the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition still dominated.²⁶ Their effect on China was profound not only by their number but more importantly by the active careers of the American-trained Chinese architects in teaching, practicing and researching. Before the 1930s, only two architectural schools in the higher education system existed, the Architectural Faculty in the National Northeast University and the one in the National Central University. The Architectural Faculty in the Northeast University was founded by Liang Sicheng – a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania – in 1928, on the basis of Paul P. Cret's curriculum.²⁷ All of Liang's colleagues were trained in America, with four out of the five, including Liang, having graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, where three of them were Cret's students.²⁸ The school was closed by the Japanese invasion in 1931, but its effect was diffused by relocation of tutors and students to other school(s) then and after.

²⁶ Before 1936, the distribution of overseas Chinese architectural students: Britain 3, France 3, Germany 2, Japan 4, Italy 1, America 37. And nearly half of the Chinese architectural students were studying in University of Pennsylvania. Zhao, Guowen (1987). pp.73.

²⁷ In architectural education, Paul Philippe Cret was a key figure of American 'Beaux-Arts' – 'modern classical'. 'From 1890 onwards, French Beaux-Arts architects, assisted by Beau-Arts trained Americans, became the driving force in architectural pedagogy'. And 'the University of Pennsylvania was identified with the name of Paul Cret, [...], created an outstanding Beaux-Arts school'. See: Frampton, Kenneth and Latour, A. (1980). pp.5-39. Paul Philippe Cret is a French born in Lyon in 1876, and entered the École des Beaux-Arts in Lyon in 1893 and in Paris four years later. In 1903, he took a teaching position at the School of Architecture in the University of Pennsylvania, and stayed with the position until he retired in 1937. He was a key figure of the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects. See: Grossman, Elizabeth Greenwell (1996).

²⁸ Tong Jun and Chen Zhi were Liang's classmates in the University of Pennsylvania. Lin Huiying, Liang's wife, studied in its Art Department and was specialised in stage and interior design. The other professor, Cai Fangyin, was trained in MIT.

The Architectural Faculty in the National Central University was set up in 1927, and its curriculum combined a 'Beaux-Arts' training with a technological orientation.²⁹ While the faculty members had a more diverse educational background, having been trained in Japan, Europe and America, the American graduates played important part in the pedagogy.³⁰ In practice, the Chinese architects who were trained abroad joined the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition and fitted into a 'modern' architecture in which an eclecticism had been initiated and carried out by foreign architects in China. Thus, while this eclecticism was on the wane in Europe and later in America, it lent vitality to the establishment of a 'new' status for the architectural profession in the 1920s in opposition to the existing Chinese construction tradition.

In the 1930s, art deco, art nouveau and modernism came into view as new architectural 'fashions' and styles in contrast to the former 'classical' style through the buildings themselves. Compared to the resistance of the Chinese fine arts, 'modernism' in Chinese architecture was accepted smoothly at the level of ideology.³¹ Not only did some foreign architects in

²⁹ Architectural training in China will be discussed in more details in the section 1.3.

³⁰ In the 1930s, Liu Futai, the Dean of Architectural Faculty, was a graduate of the Oregon State University. His proposal for Beijing National Library which won the second prize in an internal design competition was an eclectic building. Among the professors, Lu Shusen and Tan Huan were classmates of Liang Sicheng in the University of Pennsylvania.

³¹ In 1929 when the First National Exhibition of Fine Arts sponsored by the Ministry of Education was held in Shanghai, a famous debate occurred between a key realistic artist Xu Beihong and a well-known poet Xu Zhimo on 'modernism' in art. From the 1920s and 1930s, although modernism was hardly systematically introduced into China, there were wide discussions on the schools of 'modernism' in publications and exhibitions. Zhu, Boqiong and Chen, Ruilin (1989). pp.490-492. Hearn, Maxwell K. and Smith, Judith G. (2001). In taking modernism into China, the return of overseas Chinese students played an important part, with subsequent waves of importations via Japan in the 1920s and 1930s, and from France in the 1930s and 1940s. 1930s was the most active time for the Chinese 'modernist' artists. After the Japanese invasion started, and later after CCP took over the country, the artists either



Fig. 1.2-1-1, 1931.



Fig. 1.2-1-2, 1933.

China, such as Hudec, rapidly shift to the 'modernist' style, but Chinese architects themselves oscillated between eclecticism and design with a formal 'modernist' character. (Fig. 1.2-1) But because it lacked the context of social transformation, technological progress and intellectual development that it had had in Europe and America, 'modernism' was largely regarded as a 'fashion' among the various imported styles and to be merely contemporary with the 'west'. Someone once satirised the 'modernists' architects

today see the German invented style and copy it. See the English style tomorrow and you will copy it. [...] The classical architecture which was the previous cynosure is not attended to by anyone now.³²

In this respect, nothing could be more expressive than the image of the 'architectural style of the future' published in the *Commemoratory Volume for the Shanghai Architectural Society* in 1931. (Fig. 1.2-2) The combination of a Hollywood style female figure, a transparent glass ball and a 'modernist' model articulated the way the Chinese imagined the 'modern' urban life style as fashion and entertainment. In fact, the building types to which the art deco and 'modernist' styles were applied, in the case of Shanghai in the 1930s, were mostly committed to commercial use, such as hotels, luxurious high-rise apartments, department stores, banks, dance halls, cinemas, and only later



Fig. 1.2-2

voluntarily left their previous direction, or devoted themselves to socio-political work, or were forced to give up painting due to political, economic and social conditions. See: Shen, Kuiyi (1998). pp.172-180. In any case, 'modernism' was cut off in China for nearly forty years from the 1940s to 1970s.

³² Zhao, Guowen (1987). pp.77. "[建筑师有采新式者即被人视为'见异思迁,专尚摹仿,]今天视德人发明新样而抄袭之,明日视英人发明新样而抄袭之',[并感叹:]'前此之众目之的的古典建筑,竟无人过问。'"

on hospitals and private houses.³³ In contrast to 'modernism' in Europe, which was concerned with social engineering and was supported by industrial production, 'modernism' in China was intertwined with consumption from the very beginning and did not address the issue of normal people's lives.³⁴

Observing this situation, Zou Denong commented:

Some [Chinese] architects who designed western and Chinese classical architecture turned to the new style. At the beginning, it [modernist style] was the fashion. And thereafter, the essence of modern architecture was gradually appreciated.³⁵

From the mid 1930s, 'modernism' often in the name of the 'new' and 'modern' was often accepted in terms of 'utility'. Some Chinese architects, such as Tong Jun and Fan Wenzhao, came to realise that design should start 'from inside to outside'.³⁶ However, this 'gradual appreciation' does not seem to have located 'modernism' as a critical opposition to 'revivalism' and 'neo-classicalism'. An architect of the day commented:

any building design, whether American classical style, or British classical style, or Italian classical style, or even completely 'modern' ideas, if adaptive to utility, is not unable to attain its development'.³⁷

³³ Lai, Delin (1995). pp.60.

³⁴ When reviewing the Chinese Architectural Exhibition held in Shanghai in 1936, Tan Dianzi commented, 'Have an overview of the exhibition, the outcomes of the Institute for Research in Chinese Architecture are richest, but only focus upon ancient architecture. The work from our society [Shanghai Architectural Society] and of Society of Chinese Architects was mostly modern architecture. The whole exhibition does not seem paying enough attention to the buildings for ordinary people.' Tan, Dianzi (1936). pp.11. The quotation is from: Zhao, Guowen (1987). pp.82. It should be noted that what is called 'modern' architecture is not necessarily completely 'modernist', and yet is distinguished from the neoclassical architecture.

³⁵ Zou, Denong (2001). pp.83. "一些从事西洋或中国古典建筑设计的建筑师转向新风,起先是时尚之风,而后逐渐体验现代建筑的真谛。"

³⁶ Rowe, Peter G and Kuan, Seng (2003). pp.61. Zhao, Guowen (1987). pp. 80-81.

³⁷ Yang, Zhaohui (1933). pp.3. "所以任何房屋设计,无论系包含古典之美国式,或英国式,或意大利式,甚或完全为现代之思想,倘能适合实用,未有不臻于发展之途者。" The similarly utilitarian and indiscriminative viewpoints can also be found in other architects' statements, such as Lu Qianshou and Wu Jingqi. See: Zhao, Guowen (1987). pp.81.

Meanwhile, in parallel with the introduction of 'modernism' into Chinese architecture, a form of architecture with 'Chinese characteristics and spirit' – the 'inherent Chinese style' – which took up eclecticism, was promoted. The historical complications involved in the issue of 'Chinese characteristic architecture' will be discussed further in Chapter Two. The point here is that instead of objecting to 'modernism', the 'inherent Chinese architecture' was proposed in order to oppose the 'western style' as a whole and to transform traditional Chinese architecture into 'modern' on the basis of the 'Beaux-Arts' system. Some buildings with a 'modernist' appearance also combined with simplified traditional motifs and elements and were understood in terms of being both 'new' and 'Chinese'. This kind of combination indicates that the opposition between 'modernism' and 'eclecticism' existing in Europe was blurred in Chinese architecture.

The potential for modern Chinese architecture to move in a 'modernist' direction was cut down in the 1950s. Given the interference of state ideology, 'socialist content, national form' became the orthodox approach for constructing 'new' Chinese architecture.³⁸ 'Modernism' was no longer associated with 'fashion' and 'novelty'. It was condemned as a representation of capitalism and was criticised for lacking artistic content and

³⁸ 'Socialist content, national form' was promoted by Stalin and was addressed in the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Architects in 1932, in terms of the method 'socialist realism': '...The path of socialist realism, which is the principal creative technique of our artistic culture, ought to lead, in the field of architecture, to the creation of buildings combining high technical qualities and economy with artistic simplicity and expressiveness.' Ikonnikov, Andrei (1988).pp. 178-180.



Fig. 1.2-3

national character. 'International style', 'formalism' and 'functionalism' were terms more frequently used than 'modernism' in architectural criticism.

The 'socialist content, national form' formula was first introduced from the Soviet Union via the Soviet experts and the buildings they designed in China around 1953. (Fig. 1.2-3) Soon after, it dominated the design of landmark buildings and academic discussion with the demands of the Communist regime. As 'realism' in the Chinese arts of the time, 'socialist content, national form' stressed the formal representation of socio-political meanings. Zhang Bo, a Chief Architect in the Beijing Institute of Architectural Design at the time, recalled:

He [the Soviet expert] thought that [since] in its early years the Soviet Union had been encircled by more than ten imperialist and capitalist countries, [the imperialist and capitalist countries] had wanted to use the influence of the international capitalist style of architecture to corrupt proletarian Soviet architectural art. Consequently, in order to resist the effect of outside erosion, Comrade Stalin proposed the slogan 'Socialist Content, National Form', and asked planners and architects to be nourished by the traditional architectural arts and styles seen in Russian history, and to create works that would conform to people's tastes and inspire patriotism. For this reason, he [the Soviet expert] described both the Peace Hotel in Beijing and the office buildings in the western suburbs as 'structural-ist' works in cubic boxes with large glazed windows. [He] thought we were deeply poisoned by capitalism.³⁹

It was the first time I had heard this sort of criticism, which was grounded in philosophical theory, and I also felt both ashamed that I had ignored our own ancestral traditions and that the pursuit of the western form was disgraceful, or at the very least damaging to the People's feelings of self-esteem. But I did not know what to do yet. So, I asked the expert at the meeting to give some illuminating examples. Unexpectedly, what we saw were all Renaissance houses and church style buildings with spires, and after showing my incomprehension I was once again condemned.⁴⁰

³⁹ The problematic of the 'structural-ist' architectural will be discussed in Section 1.2.4.

⁴⁰ Zhang, Bo (1993). pp.71-72. "他[苏联专家]认为, 苏联建国初期, 在十几个帝国主义和资本主义国家包围中, 在建筑艺术风格上, 想用资本主义社会的国际式来腐蚀、影响无产阶级专政下的苏联建筑艺术。他大讲社会主义的经济基础, 决定着上层建筑的意识形态。因此, 斯大林同志,

Two points can be drawn from Zhang Bo's reaction. First, architectural justification relies upon the relationship between the formal characters and designated symbolic meanings. One typical example is that, from the 1950s to the 1970s, the horizontal strip-window was regarded as the representation of 'capitalism', and the vertical window was that of 'socialism'. Second, insofar as the 'socialist content, national form' was associated with the legitimation of the new regime of the CCP, the spontaneous continuum of architectural practice and development was officially cut off. But in architectural terms, this kind of 'modern' was not 'new', but continued the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition in the name of the 'new' and served the 'new' political ideology.

At the same time, buildings with a 'modernist' appearance – mainly housing, factories and stadiums, and the designs made for foreign countries and foreign residents – spread over the country. In the mid-1950s, without challenging 'socialist content and national form', the Chinese 'big roofed' 'national style' was criticised by the 'anti-waste' movement. Nevertheless, the need for the 'new' to be wrapped up in the political justifications for the 'socialist', meant that certain techniques, means and methods of 'modernism' were anonymously appreciated and

向建筑师、规划师提出‘社会主义的内容，民族的形式’口号，要从俄罗斯历史上遗留下来的民族传统建筑艺术风格中，去吸取营养，作出人民喜闻乐见，激发爱国主义的作品，以此来抵制外来的腐蚀、影响。为此，他说，北京的和平宾馆和西郊新建的办公楼，都是方盒子，大玻璃窗的结构主义作品。认为我们中了资本主义社会的流毒太深。

我第一次听到这种带有哲学理论的批判，也觉得，数典忘祖，追随西方形式可耻，至少是伤了民族自尊心。但尚不知如何是好。为此，我在会上请专家拿点样板，给以启发。不料看到的全是文艺复兴时期的住宅和大尖塔、教堂式的建筑。表示不解后，再度受到批判。”

absorbed in terms of industrialisation and standardisation. We will come back to this in Chapter Two.

Perceiving 'modernism' as either a style or as a technological advance partly resulted from the limited information. From the 1950s to 1970s, there was no translated text published on 'modernism', and only a few Chinese introductions to it.⁴¹ Foreign architecture, in the case of the *Architectural Journal* – the only nationwide architectural periodical at the time – was mainly represented by photographs of the buildings themselves, without the benefit of introductory texts.⁴² This abstraction and limitation enabled politicisation and homogenisation of the key architectural discussions, especially when all the quotations were either taken from communist leaders' work or from the 'dogmatic' conclusions reached in the Soviet Union. The constraints and degree of homogenisation imposed on resources not only empowered the manipulation of political guidelines, but also set the ground for a 'misunderstanding' of 'modernism' both at the time and later.

In the 1960s and 1970s, because of the intense waves of political discussions and the swaying guidelines in architecture, ideological discussion stopped. Architecture was reduced to symbolic translation and technical application. Instead of being based on any particular theory, buildings in the capital, Beijing,

⁴¹ The two articles about Mies van de Rohe and Walter Gropius in 1957 could be exceptional at the time. Luo, Weidong (1957). Zhou, Puyi (1957).

⁴² The situation did not mean that no one systematically studied contemporary architecture in Europe and the USA. But repressed by the political movement, no systematic introduction and independent research was circulated. In fact, just as the country was opened and the rigidly political criteria slightly loosened, Tong Jun published a series of articles and four books on modern architecture between 1978 and 1983.

were exemplified and buildings across the country came to resemble them. The term 'modern', which was associated with the 'western' and 'capitalism', was hardly used. All buildings produced at the time, whether revivalist, eclectic or 'modernist', counted as 'new'. In brief, from the 1950s to 1970s, because of political interference, economic constraints and limited information, 'modernism' was confined to being a stylistic and technological issue. While 'modernism' celebrated its triumph throughout the world, Chinese architecture remained the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition. Formal considerations, the stress on symbolic meanings and the uniformity of cityscapes became grounds for refusing 'modernism' and accepting 'postmodernism' in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

When China reopened to the world at the end of the 1970s, 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' entered into China at the same time. The temporal compact did not give enough time for Chinese architecture to digest and rethink 'modernism', and soon led to the prevalence of the 'newer' trend 'postmodernism'. 'Modernism' missed out again. Apart from pursuing the 'new', in opposition to the previous level of suppression, 'postmodernism' which attacked modernism's hegemony, uniformity and simplicity met a sympathy in Chinese criticism and its aspiration for distinctive creation and 'seeking for cultural roots'. Therefore, when the general issue of cultural expression in architecture was raised in the mid-1980s, 'postmodernism', which stressed metaphor, symbolism and historical context became the 'new'

theoretical basis to support it. At this point, the importation of 'postmodernism' lent effective devices to the opposition of the orthodox domination of the immediate past. Although having a different context and purpose from 'postmodernism' in Europe and the USA, the result was that 'modernism' was once more criticised and ignored in China.

'Postmodernism' in China could be said to have taken up Charles Jencks's version and interpretation. Because of the limited circulation of foreign publications, the few translations that were available have played a vital role. In the 1980s and 1990s, Jencks's articles and books were translated much more than others. In the ten years from 1982 to 1992, two of his books, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* and *What is Post-Modernism*, and some other five articles were published in nationwide periodicals.⁴³ His influence continued into the early 1990s when 'deconstructive architecture' was introduced into China. Compared with Robert Venturi, another key figure in 'postmodernist' architecture, whose *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* was partially translated in 1981 and published as an offprint in 1991, Jencks was more influential.⁴⁴ Till the end of the 1980s, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* was basically the most available

⁴³ *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* was first extracted and translated by Li Daxia, and was serialised in *Architect* (Beijing), Vol. 13, Vol.14, Vol.15, from 1982 to 1983. The offprint of the extracted version was issued in 1986. The translation of *What is Postmodernism* was first serialised in *World Architecture* (Beijing), 04/1987, 05/1987, 06/1987, and was published individually in 1988.

⁴⁴ Robert Venturi's another influential book *Learn from Las Vegas* was translated and published in China at the beginning of 2006. In the 1980s, the Chinese version of the *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* published in Taiwan could be found in the libraries of the architectural schools, but was not publicly circulated.

interpretation of 'postmodernism' in China.⁴⁵ From my point of view, two factors led to the emergence of this situation. First, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* was more contemporary – the third edition was just published in 1981, and met the Chinese eagerness to know what was happening in Europe and America. Second, Jencks's metaphors and semantics, although they contained brand new terms to the Chinese, actually corresponded to the previous 'symbolism' designated by politics and formal representation and were consistently acceptable to Chinese architects. At a practical level, 'words' and 'syntax' as modes of design were not difficult to operate for Chinese architects who were familiar with the composition skill inherent in the 'Beaux-Arts' training. The 'radical eclecticism' promoted by Jencks fitted into the existing architectural knowledge and context, and enhanced the 'eclectic' tradition of China. Whether or not Jencks's 'postmodern architecture' was critical enough of 'modernism' in European and American context is arguable. But it did not bring up critical points necessary to re-examine modern Chinese architecture.

The stylistic recognition of 'postmodern architecture' was partly ascribed to a truncated version of *'The Language of Postmodern Architecture'*. Its serial publication in *Architect* had fewer illustrations than the original book, and most of them concerned the appearance of the buildings. The notes to the illustrations, the pictures articulating historical and cultural

⁴⁵ Zeng, Zhaofen (1989). pp.1.

context, and most of the diagrams and photos of interiors were not present, except for the metaphoric illustrations of Ronchamp and the Pacific Design Centre with the images of the two buildings. In effect, the linkage between the appearance of a building and its metaphoric meaning was further stressed. Particularly when the context was abstracted and the content was *unfamiliar* to the Chinese audience, the representational linkage was crystallised more by the subjective interpretation of the professionals, and lacked a dimension to communicate with the pop culture proposed by Jencks.

In Chinese architecture, building itself has been a significant entity in the articulation of architectural ideas, approaches and methods. Apart from introducing and reinterpreting the theories of 'postmodernism', the real projects from Europe and America caught equal and even more attention. In 1989, the *World Architecture (Beijing)*, the main channel for introducing international architectural activities into China, held an election for the '*Most Notable World Buildings of the 1980s*'. Selected by 'experts and readers', the ten most popular buildings were: Headquarters for the HSBC, Portland Public Services Building, Corporate Headquarter of AT&T, New State Gallery Stuttgart, Tsukuba Centre Building, Extension Project of Palais du Louvre, King Khaled International Airport Riyadh, IBA Social Housing in West Berlin, Parc de la Villette, and Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto. The list may not have represented everyone's viewpoint, but projected a general perspective on contemporary architecture all over the world – the prevalence of

'postmodernism', the popularity of figurative architecture, and the tendency to combine local context with 'modern' structure. Because the understanding was based upon the images presented, it was devoid of the physical context of the situated buildings. This led to the misunderstanding that 'postmodernist' architecture was predominant in Europe and the USA.⁴⁶

In the 1990s, more information about contemporary architecture in America and Europe was introduced into China. Along with the emergence of Deconstructive architecture, 'postmodernism' passed its peak in the academic sphere. Some Chinese architects started to question the inadequacy of 'postmodernism' which directly linked sign and symbol to cultural meanings. This realisation did not really lead to a review of and rethinking of 'modernism', the relationship between 'modernism' and 'postmodernism', and the relationship between 'modernism' and current 'western' architecture, but rather urged the pursuit of even 'newer' architecture in Europe and America. The comprehension of 'modernist' architecture, as characterised by formal simplicity, functional determination and technological advance, remained at least till the end of the twentieth century. The difference between 'modernism' and 'international style' was not clarified. In other words, the difference between conceptual establishment and formal appearance were not well distinguished.

⁴⁶ The reason for this misunderstanding was partly because few Chinese architects had chance to go abroad in the 1980s. While more and more Chinese architects who were trained in the 1980s went to Europe at the turn of the twenty-first century, many of them were surprise to see that 'modernism' was still in currency, and 'postmodernism' was not as prevalent as they thought in China.

In 2000, Wang Lu, the Chief Editor of the *World Architecture* and an architectural professor in Tsinghua University, wrote a summary of the architectural trends in the last decades of the twentieth century. For his purpose, the article attempted to 'provide a way of understanding and a concise reference for architectural students who felt confused when facing the various and even contradictory architectural schools.'⁴⁷ In regard to the shift from 'modernism' to 'postmodernism', Wang Lu wrote:

At the end of the nineteenth century, modern architecture began to eliminate decoration in traditional historicist architecture. Chapter, pediment, pitched roof were replaced for simple cube and flat roof. Reinforced concrete and glass wall were largely employed. However, during the process of development, although the expressive curves of Corbusier and Saarinen and the rigid grids and details of the founder of Bauhaus Gropius and Mies showed varieties of modern architecture, a new architectural trend had already started in the 1960s. It re-claimed interest in the style of historical architecture and concern for decoration. They [the architects in this trend] did not want any longer to follow Bauhaus's functionalism that was regarded cold and boring. They wanted to re-input historical meaning into architecture. This trend was later called the school of postmodernist architecture.⁴⁸

The summary shows that the general tone of what Wang has to say carries on discussions in Chinese architecture of the 1950s and 1980s. Whereas the political justification was drawn out, his account was largely dependent on a formal account of the relationship with history. To Wang Lu, the 'postmodernist' return to historical reference was not 'backwards', but 'forwards' in architectural development:

⁴⁷ Wang, Lu (2000).

⁴⁸ Ibid. pp. 22. "19 世纪末, 现代建筑开始努力排除传统历史主义建筑中的装饰形式, 取代柱式、山花、坡屋顶的是简单的立方体和平屋顶, 钢筋混凝土材料和玻璃屋面开始大量应用。然而在其发展过程中, 虽然有柯布、沙里宁等富有表现力的曲线以及包豪斯鼻祖格罗庇乌斯、密斯等严谨的格网及细节所呈现的多样化的现代建筑景观, 但在 60 年代已开始了一种新的建筑潮流, 重新表现出对历史建筑样式的兴趣, 对装饰的关注, 他们不愿再追随被认为冷酷乏味的包豪斯功能主义, 他们要在建筑中重新植入历史感。这种思潮后来被称作后现代主义建筑思潮。"

Venturi's architecture was **not modern**, but conservative and **anti-modern**. It is certain that he did not want to drive back architectural development, but acted as an alternative to the boring and inhuman in modern architecture.⁴⁹

The point about Wang's comment is the term 'modern'. In Europe and America, Venturi was neither regarded as 'not modern', nor 'anti-modern', but as an opponent of 'modernism'. The deviation, on the one hand, shows the differences between the conceptual establishments in Chinese architecture and in European and American architecture. On the other hand, it shows that 'modernism' is a weak concept in architectural discussions in China.

In addition to this situation in which there is no 'modernism', the history of architecture in China becomes quite a different object from that in Western Europe. The situation is also characterised by being independent of the history of importation. Whether the Chinese speak of the 'Beaux-Arts', of art deco, of 'socialist realism', or of 'postmodernism', they are always speaking of an 'importation' and its adaptation to a specifically Chinese context.

1.2.3 Modern, Modernity and Modernism in Europe and the USA

Different from their use in China, the terms 'modern', 'modernity' and 'modernism' respectively operate in a relatively stable fashion in Europe and the USA. 'Modern' is a general term which has a long history in Europe. According to Lefebvre:

[f]or a long time the 'modern' has been seen as the opposite of the 'ancient'. It is a word which for centuries the new and the

⁴⁹ Ibid. "[在这个意义上,] 文丘里的建筑不是现代的, 而是保守的, 反现代的。当然他并不是要开建筑发展的倒车, 而是扮演了他认为的枯燥乏味、非人性的现代建筑的一个另类角色。”

here-and-now have used in triumphalist self-justification as a means of relegating everything that is not themselves (or that they think is not themselves) to the past. Its magic powers seem inexhaustible. Yet its meaning has changed.⁵⁰

According to Habermas's investigation and observation,

[t]he word 'modern' in its Latin form 'modernus' was used for the first time in the late 5th century in order to distinguish the present, which had become officially Christian, from the Roman and pagan past.⁵¹

Continuingly,

[p]eople considered themselves modern during the period of Charles the Great, in the 12th century, as well as in France of the late 17th century ... the term 'modern' appeared and reappeared exactly during those periods in Europe when consciousness of a new epoch formed ...⁵²

And since the seventeenth century,

ideas and situations [of the modern] become more complicated. Someone who wants to be 'modern' in one area can appear to be 'antimodern' in another.⁵³

The complexity of the meanings and the history of the word 'modern' reveals that modern as a term in Europe does not have a particularly conceptual articulation, but rather it is a general account of the opposition of something 'new' to something traditional.

However, quite different from the loose usage of 'modern', 'modernity' is clearly a category of philosophy in describing and conceptualising the conditions of being 'modern'. In terms of

⁵⁰ Lefebvre, Henri (1995). pp.168.

⁵¹ Habermas, Jürgen (1983). pp. 3.

⁵² Habermas, Jürgen (1981).

⁵³ Ibid.

historical periodisation, 'modernity' usually refers to the time dated from the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century – the emergence of capitalism and the consequent changes in social, political and economic structures and systems, such as public laws, state constitution, etc. Behind the substantial transformations and subsequent modifications, the general 'aim' of 'modernity' is to organise society in a progressively rationalised way. At the philosophical level, 'modernity' owes its existence to the European intellectual movement of the Enlightenment in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which emphasised reason and individualism at the expense of religious authority and traditional thinking. Although modernity is interpreted in a number of ways and is the object of some criticism, the core definition has been consistent from the eighteenth century onwards.

'Modernism' is a specific cultural formation of 'modernity' in a range of fields, including art, literature and architecture. It is normally dated around 1920s, and some suggest the starting point is around 1900. 'Modernism' has taken various forms across the different fields of art, i.e. futurism, surrealism, cubism, etc. But in general, the defining feature of 'modernism' is to abandon the domination of representation according to tradition and to promote abstract and subjective expression. In terms of architecture, 'modernism' emerged around the 1920s and abandoned historical and external reference and the decorative forms of neo-classicism and eclecticism that defined the

nineteenth century's architectural organisation, with the educational institution Bauhaus and the representative and influential architectural figures Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius from Europe. After the Second World War, 'modernism' spread over the world with the reconstruction of the cities destroyed by the War and the rise of new cities in the Third World, such as Brasilia. At the end of the 1960s, in reaction to the problems caused by 'modernism', 'postmodernism' arose as a return to historical and contextual reference, figurative decoration and a sort of neo-eclecticism. Whether or not 'postmodernism' is a critique of 'modernism', the point here is that 'modernism' is sharply distinguished from the eclecticism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and also of the 1970s and 1980s 'postmodernism'.

Comparing architectural perceptions in China with those of Europe and the USA, the architectural conditions and perceptions are different. Since modern Chinese architecture has not experienced the same process of architectural development as Europe and the USA, eclecticism, 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' all fall into the same category of the 'western modern' architecture. The main difference between them rests upon stylistic distinctions. In terms of the socio-cultural context, unlike Europe and the USA, the 'modern' discourse of China has taken up different formations of the category. 'Modernisation', 'modern' culture and 'modern' in China have not been conceptualised as a strong ideology and rationalised into different categories. The operation of the

singular idea 'modern' has suggested a practical flexibility and integration which intends to intertwine the political, the economic, the social and the cultural into one mechanism. Under the influence of an entirely different cultural context, a fundamental 'mistranslation' of 'western' architecture has inevitably occurred.

1.2.4 'Mistranslation' of 'Constructivism'

The whole chapter deals with the issue of the 'translation' of European and American architecture into Chinese architecture in the twentieth century. The conceptual interpretation is investigated as an entity in order to tackle the difference between architectural concepts in China and in Europe and the USA. In the preceding sections, we have argued, instead of the development from eclecticism, to 'modernism' and to 'postmodernism' in Europe and the USA on the basis of criticism one of the other, they were integrated into a single category of the 'modern' on the basis of stylistic innovation. At this point, the history of Chinese architecture in the twentieth century is characterised by a continuous absence of 'modernist' discourse. This situation was immediately related to the socio-cultural discourse in China, which does not have separate categories for 'modern', 'modernity' and 'modernism' as Europe and the USA have. That is to say, because of the different historical processes and cultural contexts, modern Chinese architecture is a different phenomenon from the 'imports' in its 'original' context. And it is of significance to note that when Chinese architects talk about the 'western', they are always dealing with

'imports' that have already been reconstructed by the Chinese.

This section will focus on the 'mistranslation' of one word, namely 'Constructivism', in Chinese architecture from the 1950s to the 1990s. By 'mistranslation', we mean not only distortion in the linguistic sense, which did happen in this case, but perhaps more importantly the recognition that this twisted signification indicates an entirely different concept of 'architecture'. In 1953, Liang Sicheng pointed out the vagueness of the word 'architecture' in Chinese:

The meaning of the term 'architecture' (*jianzhu*) is very unclear nowadays in China. Railways, dams, houses, etc. are included in 'architecture' (*jianzhu*). However, in many western countries, railways, dams and so forth are normally called 'civil engineering'. Only the art and science of designing and constructing buildings is called 'architecture'. In Russian, 'architecture' (*jianzhu xue*) is 'архитектура', which usage is carried on from the Greek. Its original meaning is 'technology of hugeness', i.e. an inclusive and synthetic science and art. This word is used in the languages of England, Italy, France and Germany.⁵⁴

In fact, within the architectural field, 'architecture' is not clearly defined as an ideological, intellectual and conceptual category. Building, construction and architecture are often interchangeably used under the rubric of '*jianzhu*'. Construction means fairly physical engineering work. The mechanism of the conceptual meaning underlies the 'misunderstanding' of 'Constructivism' and later Deconstructive architecture.

The terminological translation of 'Constructivism' into China

⁵⁴ Liang, Sicheng (1986). pp. 197. “‘建筑’这个名词，今天在中国还是含义很不明确的：铁路、水坝和房屋等都可以包括在‘建筑’以内。但是在西方的许多国家，一般都将铁路、水坝等称为‘土木工程’，只有设计和建造房屋的艺术和科学叫做‘建筑学’。在俄文里面，‘建筑学’是‘архитектура’，是从希腊文沿用下来的，原意是‘大的技术’，即包罗万象的综合性的科学艺术。在英、意、法、德等国文中都用这个字。”

experienced a literal 'misreading' of the 1950s, the 'correction' of the 1980s and 'reinterpretation' in the 1990s.⁵⁵ But we will argue that the literal revision does not need to be symmetrical with the concepts in Russia, which relates to the category of the core concept of 'construction'. For this, our questions are: what was the signification of 'Constructivism' in the 'translation'? How was it justified and interpreted under particular political and cultural conditions? Which category was the concept 'construction' ascribed to? And in consequence, what kind of architectural knowledge was indicated in terms of 'construction'?

In the 1950s, 'Constructivism' was first mistranslated as 'structural-ism' which was literally understood as the priority of physical structure, and hence technology over artistic and cultural expression in architecture.⁵⁶ The linguistic translation from 'construction' in Russian to 'structure' in Chinese lays down the primary reduction of the conceptual dimension and organisational totality of 'Constructivism'. This reduction was carried on until the end of the twentieth century. The attack on 'Constructivism' was first brought into Chinese architecture by the Soviet experts in the early 1950s – some twenty years after 'Constructivism' was suppressed in the Soviet Union – while 'socialist content, national form' was imported. Because of the historical gap, limited information and the lack of experience, the literal comprehension and 'mistranslation' enabled political

⁵⁵ Zou, Denong (2001).

⁵⁶ Here the 'structural-ism' has nothing to do with structuralism in philosophy, anthropology, etc. In order to distinguish the two unrelated concepts, which are the same in written Chinese, the thesis uses 'structural-ism' particularly for the Chinese translation of constructivism from the 1950s to 1970s.

manipulation to take place in architectural production. In consequence, 'Constructivism' was interpreted differently and even in opposition to what it initially advocated in the Soviet Union in terms of its aims, approaches, concepts and perceptions.

On the 4th of June 1959, Liu Xiufeng, the responsible minister of the Construction Department, gave a whole-day speech on '*Creating A New Chinese Socialist Architectural Style*' in the Shanghai Housing Standards and Architectural Art Symposium. The symposium was one of the biggest architectural meetings before the Cultural Revolution. It lasted 18 days from the 18th of May to the 4th of June, and consisted of a series of lectures and group discussions. More than 120 architects and educators attended it. Liu Xiufeng, who was the highest officer in the field and directed the construction of the Ten Grand Buildings in Beijing in 1959, joined most of the talks and discussions. His speech was on the last day and acted as a conclusion to the whole event and for all the issues and questions raised in the symposium. More importantly, his speech was expected to set the tone for the justification of the architectural work of the past ten years, to dissolve the current confusion and to guide future practice and discussion.⁵⁷ The speech was influential in both architectural academia and practice. The text was published in the *Architectural Journal* at the time and was reprinted in the

⁵⁷ In A History of Modern Chinese Architecture, Zou Denong has commented, 'The writing background and social effect of the speech are extremely complicated. It is an academic report, but is also an administrative article. It animates academic atmosphere, but also constrains the thoughts in the future. [... however] It is after all a valuable theoretical essay. It almost includes all the questions about architectural creation in the ten years, and has clear points. [...] Liu Xiufeng was wronged [to death]. The article *Creating A New Chinese Socialist Architectural Style* was one of the charges.' Zou, Denong (2001). pp.251.

journal *Architect* in 1979, twenty years after the first publication and three years after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

At both practical and theoretical levels, 'Constructivism' was an inevitable issue to tackle in Liu's speech. As we have discussed before, in the mid 1950s, the pursuit of the 'national form' represented by the 'big roof' and traditional ornamentation was attacked, because it clashed with the principle of 'constructing socialism more rapidly and economically'. At the practical level, technological consideration and formal simplicity of 'structural-ism' somehow met an urgent requirement in mass construction to resolve the shortage of housing, to build factories, and to reconfigure the urban fabric for enhancing industrial production. But at the theoretical or ideological level, 'Constructivism' was condemned as a product of capitalism. The conflict between the political premise and practice confused many architects who felt it made design difficult. In his speech, Liu responded:

The importance of architectural structure, which was put forward by 'structural-ism', indicates the relationship between modern architecture and mechanical and industrial technology, and opposes the academicism of 'art for art's sake'. In terms of rejecting revivalism and eclecticism and breaking down the constraints of old formalism, [structural-ism] has advanced architectural structure. However, structural-ists exaggerate the role of structure, regard structure for all [of architecture], only concern themselves with technical utility, reject artistic expression, abandon social contents, merely obey the rules of science and technology, emphasise the un-differentiation of modern architecture in socialist and capitalist countries, advocate 'internationalism', and hence completely deny the national and historical identity of architecture.

Constructivism 'absolutises' material, structure and technology and denies other factors. It takes the house as a machine for living, stresses structure, shows off structure and plays with structure without any reasonable consideration. They appreciate the beauty

of structure and yet drop into a new formalism. The cone-shaped columns cannot allow people to feel safe and comfortable. [In regard to that] a bare box supported by several 'chicken legs', is not only a weird form that cannot be called beautiful, but probably cannot even meet the functional requirements.⁵⁸

To some extent, Liu's comment on 'Constructivism' was fairly neutral in public at the time. However, as 'Constructivism' was only to be appreciated in terms of its practical and economical approach, affirming technological advance did nothing to clarify the cause of the movement of 'Constructivism' and 'modernism'. Meanwhile, based upon the same position, 'structural-ism' as well as 'modernism' was condemned for a lack of 'artistic quality'. In the criticism, the matter of 'artistic quality' did not address perception, artistic concept and aesthetics, but instead was about political justification. In this sense, the artistic expression of architecture, mostly in the name of national identity, was not about a formal issue, but depended upon symbolic signification. The critique of 'constructivism' was essentially a matter of political position rather than 'architecture' itself. In terms of ideological critique and economic appreciation, 'construction' was equated to physical 'structure' as a merely practical and technological issue. The interchangeable use of 'structural-ism', 'modernism' and 'international style' in Liu's speech not only exposed the level of confusion in historical and

⁵⁸ Liu, Xiufeng (1979). "结构主义者指出结构的重要性, 说明现代建筑同机械和工业技术的关系, 反对学院派为艺术而艺术的理论, 反对复古主义、折衷主义, 打破旧的形式主义的框框, 对促进建筑结构的发展有一定作用。但是他们过分强调了结构的重要性, 认为结构就是一切, 只讲技术合理, 反对任何艺术加工, 抛弃了建筑中的社会思想和艺术内容, 只承认建筑中的科学技术法则, 歪曲建筑艺术的美学法则, 强调近代建筑在社会主义国家和在资本主义国家的同一性, 提倡什么“世界主义”的建筑, 从而也就完全否定了建筑的民族性和历史传统。

结构主义把材料、结构、技术绝对化了, 否定了其他因素, 把房屋看作住人的机器, 甚至毫无根据地突出结构, 表现结构, 玩弄结构, 认为结构就是美, 掉入了新的形式主义的泥坑。锥形柱子, 并不能给人以安全舒服的感觉, 赤裸裸的方盒子, 用几根“鸡腿”顶着, 奇形怪状的这种那种形式, 不但不能称之为美, 也不一定能满足功能的要求。”

theoretical knowledge, but also stated an official account of the instrumental function of architecture which left out any conceptual dimension. In this sense, 'architecture' was just a technical issue.

'Constructivism' did not gain a proper corresponding term in Chinese until the early 1980s. When the corrected term 'construction' replaced 'structure', 'Constructivism' gained back a positive contribution to architectural development, and its relationship with 'modernism' was clarified. Tong Jun was the first person to make the correction and clarification.⁵⁹ In reviewing the history of 'western new architecture' from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1950s, he wrote,

In Russia in 1913, the pursuit of the interrelationship between cubes through constructive sculpting proposed by abstractionist artists led to the emergence of Constructivism in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Constructivism, which focused on architectural structure and spatial innovation, lent inspiration and advancement to new architecture. Due to ideology, Constructivism was criticised and was left out in the Soviet Union in 1932. But after the Second World War, it returned to its homeland and prevailed over the country in the appearance of western new architecture.⁶⁰

Tong Ju's account of the advance of 'new' architecture was based upon 'technological determinism'. He said:

After the Industrial Revolution in the west, the massive production of steel and concrete in the nineteenth century basically resolved the structural problem of wide-span and large-space building. It reinforced the strength, enlarged the lighting area, and benefitted fireproofing and self-weight reduction. These progresses and

⁵⁹ Tong Jun published a book *Soviet Architecture – Including Modern Architecture in Eastern Europe* in 1982, by China Architecture and Building Press. Tong, Jun (1982). This quotation is from his article *Genealogy of New Architecture* in order to show how the historical sequence was redefined.

⁶⁰ Tong, Jun (1981). pp.200. “俄罗斯在 1913 年由抽象派艺术家设想通过建筑性雕刻探索立方体相互关系，导致 1920 年构成主义出现于苏联。它着重在建筑结构和空间的创新，对新建筑起启示与推进作用。出于意识形态原因，构成派于 1932 年后在苏联本土受到批判并被打入冷宫，但从第二次世界大战后却又以西方新建筑面貌重返故乡而独步全国。”

merits cannot be achieved by brick, stone and timber, and give rise to fundamental changes of architectural technology and art, and to the emergence of architectural appearance never seen before, i.e. so called 'new architecture'.⁶¹

In the first half of the 1980s, apart from its correspondence to technological development and the contribution to new architectural features, Constructivism was also valued for its social aspiration to promote public ownership and an ascetic life style, and to serve the masses and workers.⁶² Worthy of notice, albeit the revaluation inverts the previous criticisms, the formal innovation of 'Constructivism' is regarded as a direct response to technological development and social transformation rather than the outcome of a systematic constitution from concepts, methods to organisation of objects. In this respect, the concept of 'construction' in China by default remained in the technical dimension of instrumental means and methods.

The discussion of the concept of 'construction' arose when 'Deconstructive' architecture was introduced at the end of the 1980s and the early in the 1990s. From the late 1980s onwards, more information and material on European and American architecture came to China. Some foreign architectural journals, such as *Shin Kenchiku* (Japanese), *Architecture and Urbanism*, *Architectural Review*, *AA Files*, etc., became accessible to teachers and students in architectural schools in China.⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid. pp.196. “西方在工业革命以后，十九世纪钢铁水泥大量生产，基本解决了建筑物大跨度大空间结构问题，又能增加强度，放大采光面积，兼利于防火和减轻自重。这些进步与优点都是以往砖石木料所不能达到的，它引起建筑技术和艺术的根本变化，出现了前所未见的建筑面貌，即人所习称的‘新建筑’。”

⁶² Li, Weiwei (1984). pp.224-232.

⁶³ Becoming accessible does not mean architectural students are free to read them. In most architectural schools, most of the foreign magazines were only open to teachers and graduate school students. If the

Among the journals, *Architectural Design* (AD) from the UK played a particular role in promoting 'avant-garde' architecture and a window through which the Chinese were informed of new architectural tendencies in Europe and the USA. In 1988, the AD published a special issue on Deconstructive architecture. One year after, the discussion on 'Deconstruction' appeared in Chinese architecture, and was carried through the first half of the 1990s. In this wave, 'Deconstruction' not only drew the attention of the young students and teachers, but also the elder scholars who had once advocated 'postmodernism'.

Charles Jencks's shift to ideas on 'Deconstructive' architecture caught the attention of people, and somehow intensified the message that Deconstruction was the new 'fashion' succeeding 'postmodernism'. Although other names, such as Jacques Derrida, Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, Daniel Libeskind, Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid, and their work were widely known, the special Chinese attention to Jencks was for two reasons. One stemmed from his popularity in the circles of 'postmodernism'. Zou Denong, who was active in the discussion of 'Deconstructive architecture', has reviewed as follows:

While Chinese architecture opened the door [to the world in the late 1970s], the postmodernist architecture advocated by C. Jencks was the first one to enter into China. And it occupied architecture in China for more than ten years. During this time, this theory stagnated. Promoting 'radical eclecticism', such as tradition, decoration and metaphor, was its basic characteristic. Until 1989 when deconstruction emerged in architectural discussion in China, what we accepted was still the version of this theorist. Our

impression about deconstruction was that if it was not a [new] architectural epoch, it would be a big architectural trend which was replacing postmodern architecture. The people who were used to describing architectural development by change of architectural styles undoubtedly believed it. Later [though], there was no 'deconstruction fever' in the world, and the discussion in Chinese architectural theory gradually came to silence.⁶⁴

The second reason is more complicated. As the theoretical basis of Derrida's philosophy was far removed from the Chinese linguistic and cultural context, Eisenman's theory, as it was appropriated from linguistics and philosophy, was not easy to comprehend, and was somehow reduced to a literal link between abstract theories and the generated 'new' form of architecture. By contrast, the projects of the Parc de la Villette and the Peak Leisure Club had a more profound effect in terms of formal features, such as colour, irregularity, etc. In one way or another, the emergence of 'Deconstruction' did not only surpass 'postmodernism', but also enhanced the idea that 'modernism' was outdated.

In translating the term 'Deconstruction', the ideas of 'construction' and 'structure' again became problematic. Zou Denong was the first person to bring forward the question. Instead of Derrida's theory, Zou was in favour of Philip Johnson's formal similarities between the Deconstructive projects and Constructivism, and Mark Wigley's argument that Deconstructive architecture emerged from architectural tradition

⁶⁴ Zou, Denong (2001). pp.617. "中国建筑的大门一开，第一个进来的是 C.詹克斯所宣传的后现代主义建筑，它占据中国的建筑论坛，凡十余年。此间，这种理论基本在原地踏步，提倡传统、装饰、隐喻等‘激进的折衷主义’是它的基本特征。待到 1989 年解构主义建筑在中国论坛上出现的时候，我们接受的依然是这位大理论家的版本。人们对解构建筑出现后的印象是，如果不是一个建筑时代，也是一个建筑大潮，正在取代后现代建筑。习惯于以建筑风格的更替描绘建筑进展的人们，对此深信不疑。后来世界上并没有出现解构热，中国建筑理论的论坛也逐渐沉寂下来。”

rather than from Deconstruction philosophy. He suggested that Deconstruction in the sphere of architecture should be translated as 'anti-construction' (*fan goucheng*) which meant opposing construction and was derived from its formal character:

Form is indeed the media that carries all the information of architecture. No matter how much theorists speak, it would not be clearer than what architectural form expresses in silence. Thus, it is of significance that the translated term refers to the formal character. In the sphere of architecture, it would be better to apparently address the word construction that consists of deconstruction (Deconstructionism and Deconstructionist) [in the translated term], from either literal meaning or the relationship with Constructivism. The immediate information that it conveys will be closer to the core meaning of 'against construction' rather than the peripheral [expressions].⁶⁵

Whether or not Zou's translation is accurate, his idea reflects a typical way in which Chinese architects perceive and understand the imports, – the direct connection between word, form and meaning. The abstract aspect is somehow a secondary articulation. In respect to that, the process from Constructivism to Deconstruction was more perceived at the level of formal transformation.

This kind of connection between words and architectural form is strongly embedded in architectural thinking in China. Agreeing that the literal meaning of translated terms played an important role in addressing architectural form and architectural form bore architectural ideas, Zhou Puyi, another architectural theorist,

⁶⁵ Zou, Denong (1990). pp.15. “形式确实是负载全部建筑信息的媒介；不管理论家说多少话，不如无声的建筑形式表现得更明白，所以译名反映形式特征将是很有意义的事。在建筑领域，Deconstruction（及 Deconstructionism, Deconstructionist）所包括的“构成”（Construction）一词，不论从字面上或从与构成主义的关系上来看，还是能出现为好。它传达给人们的初步信息，更逼近“反构成”的核心，而不是它的外围。”

came over another term 'loosening structure' (*san gou*), in order to avoid the 'misunderstanding' of 'deconstruction' (*jie gou*) equating to 'destruction':

To the people who interpret the word literally, deconstruction (*jie gou*) seems to indicate that the structure of a building has been disintegrated. The architectural components become a disordered assembly rather than a building. It clearly has a passive and destructive meaning. But by definition, architectural structure is the basis for a building, no matter how three-dimensional framework and two-dimensional components are constructed. If it is true, would not the currently prevalent Deconstruction be 'architecture against itself' and become an architectural style of 'self- destruction'?

However, in terms of the formal character of deconstructionist works, their structure is neither disintegrated, nor becomes fragmented pieces. Instead, in certain orderly ways, it loosely composes the three-dimension space (which to the people who believe in modern architecture is inevitably instable, disunited and loose), and yet still resists gravity and serves people and the buildings' function.⁶⁶

Thus, he suggested,

'Loosening structure' avoids the passive and destructive meaning, and reflects the actual, active and constructive meaning in distributing (loosening) structure (construction). [In this sense], the word matches the actual situation and is easy to understand.⁶⁷

This way of interpreting imports at different times in the twentieth century will appear in different parts of the thesis, and will sustain the discussions of the 'mistranslation' of the imports into Chinese architectural context. Besides the formal perception, Zhou Puyi's suggestion persists in that

⁶⁶ Zhou, Puyi Ibid. "它对一般望文生义的人来说, 似乎建筑结构已经解体, 建筑构件变成杂乱一堆已不成其为建筑了, 它具有明显的消极破坏之意。但是, 按定义来说, 建筑结构是三度空间的构架, 两度空间的构件, 不管怎样构架是成了建筑的。照此来说, 当前流行的 Deconstructionism 建筑, 岂不是建筑反对自身 (architecture against itself) 变成自我毁灭 (self destruction) 的一种建筑风格了么?"

但从 deconstructionism 作品的形式特征看, 它的结构并没有解体, 也没有支离破碎变成一堆碎片, 而是以它一定的章法, 松散(分散)地构成三度空间的结构体(对信奉现代建筑者来说不免有不稳定, 不统一、不紧密之感), 仍然在抵抗地心吸力, 为人和房屋的功能服务。”

⁶⁷ Ibid. “‘散构’避免了‘解构’的消极破坏意义。表现了分散(松散)结构(构成)的真实而积极的建设性意义变得名符其实、通俗易懂了。”

'construction' is a physical issue and the basis for the structure of a building. The distinction between the physical structure of a building ('structure') and the methodological and ideological concerns of structuring the components ('construction') is not made clear. Due to this, 'construction' as a concept was not comprehended so differently from the way it was before. Inasmuch as considering 'construction' as a formal, technological and technical issue and lacking a differentiated *conceptual dimension*, 'architecture' in China is a fairly practical knowledge.

'Constructivism' meant differently in both the generating context of Soviet art and architecture, and in the process of its spreading across Europe. To state the difference does not mean the entire distortion of the 'facts' or the matter of its 'existence', but the way to interpret and comprehend the 'facts'. The kind of deviation comes from a different category in which the concept 'construction' works.

'Constructivism' was one of the pioneering movements of 'modernism' in the 1920s together with Futurism, Cubism and Dada. As the Chinese have long known, the emergence of 'Constructivism' was initiated by the social transformation driven by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the technological development of those days. Responding to these, the Russian constructivists urged a new type of art which broke with artistic tradition, dedicated itself to industrial production, employed new technologies and materials, formulated new aesthetics,

invented new forms of art, and involved itself with everyday life. Nonetheless, instead of reflecting social and technological progress, the radical break with traditional art was to get rid of any representational reference. Alexander Vesnin, one of the leading figures of architectural 'Constructivism' and an artist in his early career, once explained:

The artist should neither represent nor interpret existing objects, whether produced by nature or human hands, but should create things that were new; that every object should structure perception. That the order of an object was determined by the rapid tempo of modern life and its mathematically accurate rhythm, by its component materials and by its effectiveness; and that whatever an artist made should be constructive without any vestige of representation.⁶⁸

What Vesnin proposed was an organisational machine that would work systematically and effectively. What the artists and architects do is to invent the abstract system – the order of an object – which was determinant and 'invisible'. The abstract organisation would lead to a new form of art which was the outcome of 'construction' rather than an 'imitation'. The new form is just one outcome rather than the purpose. The historian Selim O. Khan-Magomedov has commented:

The literal meaning of Constructivism carries a number of overtones – associations with technological constructions, with the structuring of a work of art (described in Inkhuk at that time as a 'construction'), with engineering work in the construction process, and with the task of organizing – or constructing – a new environment. All these expressions were current in Soviet art early in the 1920s.⁶⁹

Catherine Cooke, a historian of the Soviet architecture, has further explained the conceptual dimension of 'construction' in

⁶⁸ Khan-Magomedov, Selim O. (1987). pp.153.

⁶⁹ Ibid. pp.149.

the architectural context.

The Russians have one word for construction in the building sense which is *stroitel'stvo*, from *stroit*, to build: this is what you do in muddy boots on a building site. It demands that you understand about materials; that you are, in their period in particular, concerned with the material reality of the physical world. Then there is quite another word, the one from which the term Constructivism comes, which is *konstruktisia*. This is construction in the sense of structural organization, *struktisia*, and finds its most literal use in the grammatical sense. *Konstruktisia* has to do with the structure of ideas, with the construction of arguments through assembling sequences of ideas. It is, as the Constructivists said, an intellectual category.⁷⁰

[...]

Konstruktisia denotes a mode of thinking, a certain ordering of the processes of thought.⁷¹

Cooke's account of 'construction' provides an essential distinction between 'Constructivism' in the Soviet Union and in China. The conceptual category of 'construction' with the denial of external reference indicates the pursuit of autonomous architecture, which consistently embeds itself in Deconstructive architecture. In brief, architecture in Europe and the USA through 'modernism' attempts to be a more autonomous and intellectual knowledge. Albeit the nature of the pursuit might be arguable, the point here is that modern Chinese architecture, which has not experienced the course 'modernism' took place in Europe and the USA, is different. Due to this, 'mistranslation' has inevitably occurred.

What is argued in this section is that there is a profound gap not just in the meaning of words between English and Chinese, but a gap in the categories in which the meaning of the concepts operates. Above of all, referring to Section 1.2.2, we may say

⁷⁰ Cooke, Catherine (1989). pp.11.

⁷¹ Ibid. pp.12.

very crudely that in Europe and the USA, at least in architecture, 'postmodernism' comes out of a scepticism of 'modernism', and is supported or opposed on that basis. In China, there is no such perception. At this point, two correlated points should be highlighted. Firstly, because the conception and perception of architecture is different, although sharing the same references and origins, 'Constructivism' is defined and operates differently in Chinese architecture. Secondly, the pursuit of the 'newness' in Chinese architecture has been sustained by and has combined the consistency of Chinese concept with the 'imports' which are absorbed from European and American architecture. In other words, modern Chinese architecture is a complex hybrid.

1.3 Historical Study in Architectural Training in China

In the previous sections, we tried to demonstrate the hybridity of modern Chinese architecture whose process of constitution and development accompanied the mixture and 'mistranslation' of certain 'imports'. The point is that the 'mistranslation' occurred not in terms of literal meanings, but were rooted in cultural interpretations that arose under particular social and political conditions. Inasmuch as the 'mistranslation' is largely based upon the absence of 'modernism' in Chinese architecture, this section will look into the question of this institutionalised 'absence' through a historical study of architectural training.

To discern this question, we have to be aware that historical

study of twentieth century architecture has been weak in architectural pedagogy. The reason for this situation is partly because architecture is regarded as technical training, and partly because of the interference of state politics. In ancient China, building skills were regarded as a craftsmanship, which was never counted as a serious academic or intellectual sphere. It was until the first decades of the twentieth century that 'architecture' became a 'proper' profession. The *professional* training of architects, as with other modern subjects, began with the sending of students to study abroad in Japan, America, Britain, France, Germany, etc. Zhuang Jun, who was sent to America in 1910, was the first architectural student in the history.⁷²

In the 1920s, foreign-trained Chinese students returned, and commenced with proper professional training. In 1923, the first architectural department was founded by four Japanese-trained Chinese architects in Suzhou Polytechnic.⁷³ As the graduates aimed 'to take charge of the whole construction process from design to building and to understand construction work', it was mostly an engineering-orientated training.⁷⁴ In 1927, the school was merged into the Architectural Faculty of the National Central University in Nanjing. Because the tutors came from different

⁷² Zhao, Guowen (1987). pp.73. Architectural training in China lingered behind other modern subjects, such as engineering and mechanics. The first architectural student appeared almost thirty-seven years later than students in other subjects, and the first architectural school in Suzhou Polytechnic was founded twenty years later than civil engineering.

⁷³ They are Liu Shiyong, Liu Dunzhen, Zhu Shigui and Huang Zuomiao who were all trained in Tokyo Polytechnic. Zhang Yongsan, compiled by Wang, Huiying (1985). pp.160. Pan, Guxi and Shan, Yong (1999). pp. 90.

⁷⁴ According to the memory of Zhang Yongsan, a student at that time, the courses included architectural design, architectural history, construction (details) of Chinese and Western architecture, structure, survey and fine arts. Zhang, Yongsan (1985). pp.160. Lai, Delin (1993). pp.87. Pan, Guxi and Shan, Yong (1999). pp. 89-96.

training backgrounds,⁷⁵ the curriculum combined the American 'Beaux-Arts' and engineering orientation, and thus paid equal attention to design and engineering.⁷⁶ In 1928, a more American 'Beaux-Arts'-based Architectural Faculty in the Engineering Department of the Northeast University was established. Its design studio took the Atelier System, and Fine Art skills were particularly emphasised. Free hand drawing, charcoal drawing, water colour and figure sketching were carried on throughout the four-year course.⁷⁷ At the same time, the students were asked to join the technological studies provided by the Civil Engineering Faculty, such as calculus and mechanics.⁷⁸ The technique-based pedagogy in the first two architectural schools laid the foundation and framework for professional training in later years.

By the end of the 1940s, fourteen architectural schools had been set up in different universities.⁷⁹ While most of them were established on a similar basis to the first two, 'modernism' began to find fertile ground. In 1942, the first and the only 'modernist'-based training school in China, the Architectural Faculty in St. Joseph University, was established by Huang Zuoshen, who was a graduate of the AA School and a student of Gropius in Harvard University. In 1946, when Liang Sicheng

⁷⁵ Apart from the tutors graduated from America mentioned before, Liu Dunzhen was trained in Japan and was the only remained tutor from the Suzhou Polytechnic. Li Zuhong was graduated from Glasgow University, and Bei Jimei from Berlin Industrial University. Liu Jipiao and Yu Binglie were trained in Ecole des Beaux-Arts. From the student's viewpoint, Liu and Ye belonged to 'western and new'. Zhang, Bo (1993). pp.9-10. Pan, Guxi and Shan, Yong (1999). pp. 89-96.

⁷⁶ In 1944, Tong Jun, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, wrote an article in Architectural Education which was not published until 2000. Tong, Ju (2000). pp.114-115. The curricula also see: Pan, Guxi and Shan, Yong (1999). pp. 94. (Appendix 1)

⁷⁷ Zhang, Bo (1993). pp.7.

⁷⁸ Ibid. pp.6-7. Tong, Ju (2000). pp. 113-116.

⁷⁹ Lai, Delin (1993). pp. 86-89.

founded another American 'Beaux-Arts'-orientated architectural school in Tsinghua University, he came to realise that architecture was not only about building but also about a physical environment 'where humanity, technology and arts were to be well integrated'.⁸⁰ In brief, from the 1920s to 1940s, architectural education gradually grew up in China. Although 'modernism' had a certain presence in the 1940s, the whole training system which combined the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition with technological studies was largely technique-oriented.

Architectural training became more technological in the 1950s. In 1952, under the aegis of 'learning from the Soviet Union', the state proceeded with a nationwide adjustment in the higher educational system in order to enhance specialisation and standardisation. Literature, arts and science were separated from engineering, to which architectural training has been assigned since then. From 1952 to 1959, all architectural schools were grouped into eight departments located either in the engineering-based universities or in the special building science colleges. While the previous curricula continued, practical ability was particularly emphasised, as it was deemed that 'education should face production, education should face livelihood'. Practice in the construction field became compulsory in the whole training process.⁸¹ In the Cultural Revolution from

⁸⁰ Li, Xiaodong and Chong, Keng Hua (2003). pp. 305.

⁸¹ This is from my interviews. Xia Yun, a graduate of Tsinghua University in 1954, recalled that the students were requested to work in the construction field twice during the school. One was in the middle of the course and the last one was graduating practice in the final year. He once joined in constructing a steel factory in Anshan. Chen Dexiang, another graduate from Tsinghua University in 1956, had strong memory in their building the teaching building in the campus. Lu Xiaodi and Chen Dexiang who graduated from Tsinghua University in 1956 recalled the same experience. The training process, on the one hand, could make the graduates more suitable to practice; on the other hand, met the urgent request

1966 to 1976, architectural education basically ceased. Most of the architectural departments were disbanded or merged into civil engineering faculties, many of which were called 'industrial and civil construction' departments. Institutionally, architecture was not recognised as an independent profession but a branch of civil engineering.

The present phase of architectural training started in 1978, and took over the educational model of the 1950s and 1960s. Chang Yung Ho, a student in the early 1980s, recalled:

In the very first architecture class I entered after the Great Cultural Revolution in 1978, any ideological content, and even the notion of design, was avoided. It was training in building technology.⁸²

Since the 1980s, more and more architectural schools have been set up and most of them are arranged as independent departments. In the early 1990s, 'architecture' began to be awarded as a degree to graduates from architectural departments. Nevertheless, architecture was still designated as an 'engineering' discipline, and the framework of architectural education retained the technical aspect of training. The institutionalised training sustained and led to the practicality of architectural profession in China.

Because of its technical orientation, studies of architectural history were marginalised, although they were still compulsory courses. The proportion of the course devoted to historical studies was one year in a total of four (later five) years of

of the state for trained professionals for the new constructions.

⁸² Chang, Yung Ho (2004). pp.87

training. History studies consisted of two courses – the History of Chinese Architecture and the History of Foreign Architecture, which respectively took one semester in the second year and another one in the third year. As each course contained an ancient part and a modern part, the modern history of architecture was taught for less than half a year in total.⁸³ For instance, in the Xi'an Architecture and Technology University, the modern part of foreign architectural history occupied ten percent of course time in the 1980s, and half a percent by the end of the 1990s.⁸⁴ In Chongqing University, the history of Chinese architecture from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s was taught in three sections out of twenty in the early 1980s, and nearly seven sections at the end of the 1990s.⁸⁵ The ratio between the ancient part and modern part varied slightly from school to school, but in terms of institutional reality, the modern history of architecture was treated mainly as a matter of general knowledge rather than as a necessary part of the process of developing architectural knowledge.

The history of modern architecture was not 'properly' taught until the 1980s. That is to say, in terms of institutionalised knowledge, the idea of 'modernist' architecture entered China about sixty years after Europe and America. The history of modern Chinese architecture lagged behind even more.

⁸³ The information is from curricula in the Chongqing University, Tianjin University, Tsinghua University and Shenzhen University, interviews with the historical Professor Zhang Sizan from Xi'an Architecture and Technology University, and Professor Yang Songlin from Chongqing University, interviews with ten graduates from different universities at different times, and also from my personal experience.

⁸⁴ Interview with Professor Zhang Sizan by Hua Li, January 2006. Zhang is specialised in the field of modern history of Western architecture.

⁸⁵ Interview with Professor Yang Songlin by Hua Li, January 2006. Yang is specialised in the field of modern history of Chinese architecture.

Because the history of contemporary Chinese architecture since 1949 was deemed too 'sensitive' in both political and academic senses, it remained absent until the third edition of the textbook *History of Chinese Architecture* included this part in 2000. In consequence, the institutionalised vacuum, on the one hand, allowed the space to be taken up by mainstream ideology. On the other hand, it brought up an obstacle to not only perceiving and situating current world and Chinese architecture within a historical sequence, but also to defining the architectural problems and questions which on the basis of criticism drive development. In the following discussions, I will focus on a key teaching device – the textbook on the history of modern architecture in Europe and the USA.

In Chinese education, the 'textbook' plays a powerful role in formalising professional knowledge and passing on mainstream ideology. It is the major reference source for learning and provides a framework for teaching. The textbook *The History of Modern Foreign Architecture* was basically about the history of modern architecture in Western Europe and the USA.⁸⁶ The first edition was published in 1982 and was the second introductory book on this field in China.⁸⁷ It was widely circulated in every architectural school and had been in use for more than twenty years when the second edition came out in 2004. *The History of Modern Foreign Architecture* was sponsored by the government and followed the framework set

⁸⁶ The Editing Group of the History of Foreign Modern Architecture (1982). pp.3.

⁸⁷ Tong Jun's *New Architecture and Schools* published in 1980 was the first systematically introductory book on 'modern' architecture one, two years earlier than the *History of Foreign Modern Architecture*. Tong, Jun (1980).

by the Ministry of Education. Instead of being written by an individual, it was compiled as a standard teaching model by a group from four architectural schools. Its 'length was determined by the teaching hours decided in the "Meeting of Architectural Textbooks" of 1978. [...] The written type and the length of the book were discussed in the Meeting on the Outline of Teaching Materials'. The first draft, individual chapters of which were written by different authors, was unified and approved through collective meetings.⁸⁸

Two aspects are embedded in the collective decision-making process. Firstly, it ensured the consistency and 'correctness' of political line in writing and accounting the history. Secondly, it intended to possess a sort of 'objective' position in historical account, which concealed any 'subjective' intention and discarded individual criticism. Therefore, the textbook not only framed the essential knowledge to be taught and to be learnt, but also formulated the authentic way to perceive and to process the 'facts'.

The *History of Foreign Modern Architecture* was arranged in the form of 'general history' in which the idea of 'progression' was based upon Marxist historical materialism. The validity of this historical perspective might be questioned, but the way in which the history was narrated had effects upon the understanding of architectural development that cannot be ignored. In accordance with the orthodox view of the political and economic

⁸⁸ The Editing Group of the *History of Foreign Modern Architecture* (1982). Forward.

course of development taken by capitalism, which goes from the 'primitive', 'developing', and 'prosperous' stages, and then somehow to one of 'crisis', architectural history from the eighteenth century onward was divided into four successive stages. The architectural history was adapted to and subordinated to a general social periodisation, architectural development and activities became a mere reflection of the socio-political progress. For instance, when accounting for the emergence of classical revivalism as a manifestation of the political requests of the rising bourgeoisie, the editors of the *History of Foreign Modern Architecture* wrote:

Before the eighteenth century, the architectural styles of Baroque and Rococo prevailed over Europe. It reflected that the life of the noble [class] more and more degenerated and that despotism was going to end. The considerable employment of excessive decoration and valuable metal-made mosaic in architecture caught antipathy of the new rising bourgeoisie. Their attitude to Baroque and Rococo style was as the same as to the despotic system. They thought that they constrained creativity of architecture and did not fit to art idea of the new epoch. Thus, they asked for concise means to replace the outmoded things. In seeking the new architectural form, they borrowed classical envelop to perform the progressive role. The heritage of classical architecture of Greece and Rome then became the resource of the creation.⁸⁹

This kind of commitment to political justification may not be widely accepted nowadays, but it strengthened the direct relationship between architectural style and symbolic content. Hence, formal renovation or creation rather than critical thinking was privileged. In regard to the changes of Le Corbusier before the Second World War and after, the editors commented:

⁸⁹ Ibid. pp.9. “在十八世纪前的欧洲，巴洛克和洛可可建筑风格盛行一时，它反映了贵族生活日益腐化堕落，专制制度已经走上末路。在建筑上大量使用繁琐的装饰与贵重金属的镶嵌，已引起新兴资产阶级的厌恶。他们对于巴洛克和洛可可风格正如对待专制制度一样。认为它束缚了建筑的创造性，不适合于新时代的艺术观，因此要求用简洁明快的处理手段来代替那些陈旧了得东西。他们在探求新建筑形式的过程中，曾借用了古典的外衣去扮演进步的角色，希腊和罗马的古典建筑遗产成了当时创作的源泉。”

Under the social condition of capitalism, architectural style is unable to keep stable for a long time. As the other artists, architects have to continuously propose new things. The new architectural style in the 1920s, which later becomes a fixed means called 'international style', is no longer popular. This is another reason that forces Le Corbusier and other architects to seek for new style.⁹⁰

The point here is not to deny the relationship between architectural development and social conditions, but to argue against the reduction of the architectural issues to political judgement.

Apart from the reduction, the politicised periodisation, which was taken as a standard to apply to architectural history, created certain obstacles. In China, the general history of the world from the eighteenth century onwards is divided into two parts. The period from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (1640 to 1917), when capitalist society arises and develops, is *jindai* – the quasi-modern time or the capitalist time. The period from 1917 onwards is *xiandai* – the modern time or the socialist time, whose origin is signified by the October Revolution in Russia and the establishment of socialist countries. The politically designated periodisations cause some ambiguities in accounting for the 'modern'. Before the 1950s, there was no such distinction between 'quasi-modern' (*jindai*) and 'modern' (*xiandai*). *Jindai*, which was first borrowed from Japanese, had the same meaning as 'modern', which in turn was translated

⁹⁰ When I read such kind of words time by time through the textbook, I feel hard to discern whether the editors believed or how much they believed the political judgement. But it seems evident that this is an obligation to legitimate architectural account. Ibid. pp.89. “在现代资本主义社会条件下，建筑风格不可能长期保持稳定，建筑师和其他艺术家一样，也必须不断提出新的东西来。二十年代的新建筑风格后来变成了名为‘国际式’的僵化了的手法，不再受欢迎。这也是促使勒·柯布西耶以及其他人士寻求新风格的又一个原因。”

from English and French.⁹¹ While *jindai* was appropriated as a particularly historical term, twofold meanings were created. On the one hand, the history before the end of the First World War was 'non-modern'; on the other hand, as the previous signification was inherited and capitalism was still to a considerable extent carried on, *jindai* and *xiandai* were often combined together as *jin-xian-dai*, generally meaning 'modern times'.

When applied to architecture, the differentiation and combination of *jindai* and *xiandai* generated double accounts of 'modern' architecture. In general terms, all buildings and styles that had appeared in Europe and the USA since the eighteenth century could be regarded as 'modern', and this account is enhanced by the fact that revivalist and eclectic architecture from Europe initiated the commencement of the modern architectural scene in China, as has been discussed in Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2. In more professional terms, according to the *History of Foreign Modern Architecture*, 'modern' architecture with distinguishing characteristics from the previous movements began in the 1920s between the two World Wars, along with the start of the 'modern' period. The gap between the two accounts left an ambiguity regarding nineteenth century architecture, which somehow manages to sway between 'non-modern' and 'modern'. Inasmuch as the periodisation lacked an insight into the architectural questions that formed the development and the philosophical and ideological dimension of the account, the

⁹¹ Liu, Lydia H. (1996). pp.284, pp.292.

historical sequence of architecture was determined by social and technological developments, and was judged by formal characteristics. Discussions of the changes of concepts and in thinking were missing. That is to say, the concept of 'modernity' did not exist in the historical account. 'Modern' architecture, in one way or another, became a 'broad church' within which the different architectural schools coexisted. In this respect, the formalised knowledge somehow organised a basis for counting 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' in the same category as the 'modern' in the years following.

The whole textbook ended with a brief introduction to 'postmodernism', after charting a range of derivations of 'modern architecture' from the 1940s to the 1960s.

On a recently appeared school called 'postmodernism', several sentences need to drop here. 'Postmodernism' is a trend which intends to negate the present situation, and thinks that architecture must proceed to a complete renovation. It comprises a number of schools which do not have consentaneous opinions and approaches, except for the same desire of renovation at the academic level. The most remarkable one of them is that cares about the historical manners, and was once called 'The Grays'.

[...]

Undoubtedly, things are continuously developing. The new things will eventually replace the old ones. Can 'postmodernism' become a main trend? So far, whether it is just a flash in the pan, or it only exists at most as one direction of a number of tendencies, is unclear. At present, postmodernism is much cry and little wool. Its impact upon the design principles of 'modern architecture' is comprehensible. However, architecture cannot be free from the nature of a social and material production. It seems that, unless 'postmodernism' changes the meaning of the term, i.e. changes its contents, it is difficult to be a main stream.⁹²

⁹² The Editing Group of the History of Foreign Modern Architecture (1982). pp. 299. “关于近年来出现的一个称为‘现代主义之后’的派别这里想简单地说几句。‘现代主义之后’派是一个企图否定现状认为建筑必须进行彻底革新的派别。它本身还包括有许多派，它们在学术上除了共同的革新愿望之外，并没有一致的见解，其革新途径也是多种多样的。目前最引人注意的是其中一个讲究历史式样的派别，这个派别曾有灰色派之称。

[...] 无疑地，事物是不断发展的，旧的东西最终将为新的所代替。但是‘现代主义之后’派究竟会不会发展成为一种主要倾向呢？或只不过是昙花一现，或最多只能作为许多倾向中的一个

The chronological narrative implies that the emergence of 'postmodernism' was brought a newer direction to architectural development. Whether or not 'postmodernism' would prove to be the 'real' direction of the future, 'modernism' or 'modern' architecture of the 1920s was fading and somehow outdated. It is worthwhile noticing the way in which the editors were concerned that whether 'postmodernism' could be a future tendency was dependent upon *practical* feasibility. In other words, the historical valuation of architectural trends stressed the priority of the practicality of the design approach over the critical nature of the thinking behind it.

It is fair to say that this kind of commentary and conclusion may not be accepted by students, teachers and academic researchers. But its importance should not be under-estimated. The training of architects was a purely technical training in which the historical sources of buildings and the periodisation of architecture were not considered to be a central part of the business of architectural education. Moreover, the situation was even more radical. Official texts on architecture and on style were reduced to discussions about the relations of form and architecture to different political lines. This situation resulted in problems with two aspects. To Chinese architects, it prevented the imports from giving rise to a re-examination and reformulation of architectural problems and issues within

方面而存在，至今尚不明朗。目前，它雷声大、雨点小，对‘现代建筑’的设计原则有所冲击，这是可以理解的。不过，建筑是脱离不了它作为一种社会物质生产方面的特征的，看来除非‘现代主义之后’派这个名称的含义有所改变，亦即它的内容有变更，否则是很难成为主流的。”

architectural knowledge. To researchers who are interested in trying to reconstruct the history of recent Chinese architecture, it brought about an obstacle because no obvious sources of the most published literature on information about governmental and administrative discussion, the formulation of building programmes, the involvement of architectural ideas and techniques, and the assessment of their effects, were available. In consequence, architecture in China has remained at the practical level where issues and methods are not amenable to being generalised and theorised.

We can draw a number of conclusions from this. Throughout the twentieth century, China imports architecture, architectural pedagogy, architectural ideas, etc. from Europe and the USA. But this process cannot by itself be regarded as a simple mechanism of importation, for the effect of the importations was determined by the context of their appropriation. This fact exists at various levels. Whether in the form of architectural ideas, architecture itself and ideas relating to education, they were appropriated by a distinct Chinese institutional, intellectual and political history.

Certain features of this process stand out clearly. The first is the Chinese conviction that architecture was a practical skill which ought to be placed close to the discipline of engineering and to practical issues of design and construction. This meant the Chinese appropriation of architecture was ripped out of the

western context in which architectural positions were clearly related to a close involvement with other arts and discussions about the relationship of architecture to forms of life and in general to the cultural conditions of architecture. Throughout the twentieth century, the appropriation of western architecture elevated the technical, constructional and technological conditions at the expense of a cultural and social appreciation of the intentions of western architecture. This reached a climax with what we might call the 'misreading' of imported architecture which resulted from the tendency to prefer the dangers of literal translation to any attempt to understand imported architectural discourse in terms of its own context.⁹³

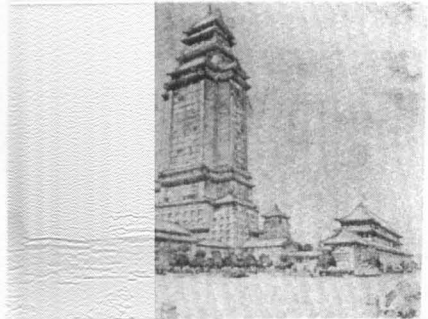
⁹³ At a level of architectural discourse, we have made strong distinction between what we might call literal translation and contextual translation. This is a complex issue and cannot be reduced to a purely linguistic phenomenon. We are not saying that the literal translation in a simple sense is incorrect and is impossible to translate, but we are saying that in general it is a form of translation which reduces the term to be translated to a translated term which privileges the meanings of the host language. It tends to eradicate the difference between foreign terms and host terms. Doubtless all translations are guilty of this and it has led some people to suggest that ultimately languages are not really translatable into each other. This is not however our problem. Let us imagine the literal translation is based upon the operation which tries to find a word with which to translate a foreign word. Such translation must concern itself with the meaning of a word. But it is one which moves very quickly to a common sense equivalent of concepts. This can be seen very clearly from the examples given of 'constructivism' and 'deconstruction'. The appearance of structure in 'constructivism' and construction within deconstruction produce the situation in which the former two terms dominates the translation. This ignores the obvious linguistic phenomenon in which words frequently perhaps even always migrate from the origins of the meaning to a projective meaning in the other context. The term deconstruction refers to conceptually if not linguistically to the work of Jacques Derrida. 'Deconstruction' had long established itself within philosophic and literal practice before being associated with architecture. In Chinese translation or perhaps any Chinese glossary, the commentary would take it into account or ran the risk to provide a suitable translation of the term. Architectural discourse is full of such terms. A translation of the term functionalism within modernism makes it vital to indicate its meaning in Le Corbusier rather than reliance upon the engineering or mathematical concept of function.

Nonetheless a literal translation is always one which 'severs' a certain point of view. In the Chinese case, it is quite clear that literal translation always move in one direction – a way from cultural complexity within which the term has distinct meaning and towards the simplicity of abstract but practical meaning (construction, structure, etc.) The history of the importation of English categories just as much as European and American architecture is a history of the attempt to domesticate certain terms which would otherwise seem foreign into a framework of architecture in which the practice of architecture is neutral and technical, and content is not so much cultural but political. The prominence of the technical and political themselves goes a long way to explain the history of literal translation of the imported terms into Chinese. Indeed, rather than an element of translation at all, it is perhaps easier to regard them as element of a linguistic machine to appropriate imports through the discipline in a specifically Chinese common sense. Translation here refers not to a universal necessity of what everybody knows but rather specific cultural formations of meaning.

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Chapter Two

The 'Beaux-Arts' Practice and Constitution of Architectural Knowledge in Contemporary China

This chapter is about the 'Beaux-Arts' practice in Chinese architecture. In the last chapter, I discussed the issue of the difference between contemporary Chinese architecture and European and American architecture. This difference is characterised by the absence and continuous absence of modernist discourse from twentieth century Chinese architecture. Two points should be clarified. First, while twentieth century Chinese architecture is largely free from any general modernist influence, some buildings may be described as 'modernist' or indebted to 'modernism'. They are exceptions. Second, in absence of any distinctive 'modernism', China, in effect, relied from the late nineteenth century up to the 1990s on the essential outlines of the 'Beaux-Arts' practice. This chapter will examine how the 'Beaux-Arts' practice sustained the constitution of architectural knowledge in China from the 1950s onward, and will argue that there is no such homogeneous totality of 'Chinese' architecture.

'Beaux-Arts' architecture, at least from the viewpoint of China, but probably more generally cross the world, is one of the elements of what we might call 'modern architecture'. Using the term 'modern architecture' runs risk of being misunderstood, for it by no way implies anything like 'modernist' architecture. **Rather, it is more concerned with the argument that architecture was a modern form of practice into which the 'Beaux-Arts' system fitted in the following senses.** First, the architect emerged as a professional figure in a modern society, acting both as an agent dealing with the project, coordinating the different requirements of clients, planning agencies and users, and a mediator of the design ideas, engineering technologies and construction specifications. In this respect, the professional figure had a recognisable social standing and usually a legal identity. Second, professional training was conducted in a university or quasi-university rather than by means of apprenticeship in the workplace, and was thus independent of practice, spatially, administratively and financially. Third, the system of architectural knowledge provided a common way of approaching design problems, analysing sites, processing materials and forms and organising spaces, which was shared by architects working in different offices and working in different styles. Fourth, it was

able to develop recognisable forms for new types of function, such as banks, railway stations, offices, etc. Fifth, architectural training and practice were organised and operated in a modern financial condition. Sixth, the system incorporated different forms, meanings and construction traditions within itself and under the circumstances of different national conditions. Finally, it was modern in the sense that Michel Foucault regarded modern medicine as originating in the nineteenth century. Of course there had been doctors, medicines and therapies before. Nevertheless, for Michael Foucault, the rise of the clinic and the clinical method of incorporating new knowledge initiated the start of modern clinical medicine. Likewise, architecture was a discursive practice conditioned and determined by modernity, and it was these circumstances of this modernity that enabled the organisation of the 'Beaux-Arts' system.

The influences of the 'Beaux-Arts' came into China through different channels at different times in the twentieth century. Two of them are significant. One is the American 'Beaux-Arts' in the 1920s. This was the system that trained most of the first generation of modern Chinese architects and provided the basis upon which architectural education, practice and historical research were built.¹ The other means of entry is by way of the architectural theories and practices of the Soviet Union in the 1950s, which were themselves influenced by the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition, and which were made to stand in China in place of those from America and Europe. Indeed, while a great deal of research and literature has dealt with the former, the latter has received much less scholarly attention, and the few studies are largely concerned with ideological and formal effects. It is sure that architectural activities in the 1920s and 1930s constituted the basis of architectural knowledge in China, and that the basis is still sound and effective. Nevertheless, the influence of those developments that took place in the 1950s and 1960s should not be underestimated. Although they did not substantially change the method of architectural design, the curricula of architectural training, and the nature of architectural practice, the reconfiguration of the whole system laid the foundation for

¹ See: Section 1.2.2, pp. 58-60; and Section 1.3, pp.92-94.

architectural practice at the time and thereafter.

One may wonder then about the influence of so-called 'postmodernism' in China since the 1980s, which seems both so obvious and current in contemporary practice and architectural discussions. In terms of constituting the architectural system in China, it seems to have less effect than the two systems mentioned above. As Chapter One revealed, its prevalence corresponds to the continuity of the 'Beaux-Arts' practice in Chinese architecture. Because of this, this chapter will mainly focus on the formation of architectural knowledge in the 1980s, which will in turn link back to the architectural activities of the 1950s. Perhaps from this perspective, we can have a better understanding of contemporary Chinese architecture and urbanism, which has retained the 'Beaux-Arts' practice in the changing circumstances of state policies, ideologies and economics.

2.1 The 'New' and the 'Chinese' – Indications in Liang Sicheng's Drawings

In 1954, one year after visiting Moscow, Liang Sicheng published two drawings of the 'imaginary' 'national form' of Chinese architecture in his book, the *Architecture of Motherland* (*zuguo de jianzhu*). (Fig. 2.1-1) Liang is an important figure in the history of Chinese architecture. He is well known for his unsuccessful attempts to conserve old Beijing and for his promotion of a 'national form' of Chinese architecture. As mentioned in the last chapter, Liang was one of the first Chinese architects who received the 'Beaux-Arts' training at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1920s, and was one of the founders of architectural education in China, and indeed one of initiators of historical research into Chinese architecture.

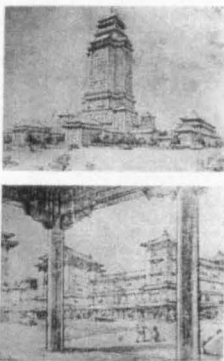


Fig. 2.1-1

Although he was largely uninvolved with practice, his contributions to some monumental projects, such as the national emblem and the Monument to People's Hero, were remarkable. When the book was published, Liang was Vice President of the Society of Chinese Architecture, the Dean and a professor of the Department of Architecture at Tsinghua University, and an expert advisor to the government. Nonetheless, the *Architecture of Motherland* was not just for professionals. The content came from his speech at the Scientific Lectures of the Central Committee, and it was published by the National Council for Popularisation of Science and Technology, and was sponsored by the state. In this sense, the book acts as a bridge introducing architecture and the architects' job to officials and the public.²

The two sketches were skilfully drawn and presented in an eclectic style. Take the one of the high-rise complex as an example. The building body, type and technology, such as the glass-curtain wall, are 'modern' and 'universal'. They do not have any particular 'Chinese character' and could be found anywhere in the world. Yet, the eaves wrapping the bodies and the rooves are apparently derived from 'traditional' Chinese architecture and stand for the 'Chinese' character. Neither the form of construction nor the formal coherence of 'traditional'

² In the first half of the 1950s, Liang Sicheng published a number of architectural articles in professional and public media, such as *Architectural Journal* (Beijing), *New Construction*, *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *Beijing Daily*, etc. Zou Denong has commented that Liang Sicheng was almost the only one Chinese architect to write for public at the time, due to his position and his knowledge. The series articles basically share the same ideas in the book of the *Architecture of Motherland*. In 2000, in honour of his contribution to Chinese architecture, the first national architectural design prize was founded in his name.

Liang has been extensively studied and has appeared in many historical writings and researches since the 1980s. Some of them are listed referring to his biography. English: Fairbank, Wilma (1994). Li, Shiqiao (2002). Rowe, Peter G. and Kuan, Seng (2003). Chinese: Lin, Zhu (1996). Liu Xianjue (2000); Fu, Chaoqing (1993); Zou, Denong (2001). Wang, Jun (2003).

Chinese architecture is retained. It is rather a re-composition of traditional elements within a modern structure. Indeed, for Liang Sicheng, 'national form' is by no means a repetition of the 'past', but instead should be 'new' and 'Chinese'. He said:

The artistic form of our new buildings, no matter whether seen up close or from a distance, or from the exterior or the interior, should be absolutely but not ambiguously 'national and have the character of our nation' [...] But they are definitely not the copies of existing altars, temples and palaces that have been built but should develop from the basis of their traditional artistic forms. [...] At the same time, they absorb the advanced science and technology of foreign architectures and their artistic forms that 'are useful to us'.³

That is to say, in terms of the intention of Liang Sicheng, the 'new' creation with 'Chinese characteristics' is a hybrid combination.

For Liang, nevertheless, to represent the 'genuine' Chinese character was founded on a regulated system:

From these two sketches, I intend to illustrate two points. First, no matter what the size of the house and how many stories it has, we can always use our traditional forms and 'grammar' to deal with. Second, national form is achieved above all by outline of a building and a building complex, and then by proportion and rhythm of walls, doors and windows. Motifs and ornaments are secondary aspects. [...] Only when we master the rules of architecture of the motherland, are we able to create things newer in the future.⁴

However, the terms of outline, proportion and rhythm in Liang's statement simply did not exist in traditional Chinese construction.

³ Liang, Sicheng (1986). pp. 228. Liang's quotation was from the Selected Works of Mao Zedong. "我们的新建筑在艺术造型上，无论远看、里看、外看，都明确而肯定地，而不是似是而非和若有若无地'是我们这个民族的，带有我们民族的特性'。[...] 但是这些建筑绝对不是一座座已经造成的坛、庙、宫殿的翻版，而是从它们传统的艺术造型的基础上发展而来的。[...] 且同时吸收了外国建筑的先进科学技术以及他们的艺术造型总的'我们用得着的东西'。"

⁴ Ibid. pp. 156-157. "在这两张图中，我只企图说明两个问题：第一，无论房屋大小，层数高低，都可以用我们传统的形式和“文法”处理；第二，民族形式的取得首先在建筑群和建筑物的总轮廓，其次在墙面和门窗等部分的比例和韵律，花纹装饰只是其中次要的因素”。The words have been quoted widely, such as in: Fu, Chaoping (1993). pp. 178-181; Zou, Denong (2001). pp.154.

The 'grammar' and the controlling principles were equally absent. Instead, these categories were borrowed from the 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition' to interpret the 'traditions' of Chinese architecture and to transform the interpretation into a 'new' creation, the 'national form'. The 'tradition' was thus a 'modern' and conscious reconstruction on the basis of the 'Beaux-Arts' system by referring to traditional construction in China. Therefore, the 'grammar' and the principles proposed by Liang were a Chinese version of the 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition', rather than a development of any Chinese 'tradition'.

2.1.1 The 'Beaux-Arts' Composition

Of course, to create 'new' things with the 'old' is a central belief of 'Beaux-Arts' architecture itself, and composition is the essential technique to make it into practice. Julien Guadet once declared, 'to compose is to make use of what is known' (*Composer, c'est faire l'emploi de ce qu*).⁵ Here, we need to distinguish two views of history in 'Beaux-Arts' architecture, the academic and the practical. At the academic and theoretical level, history seems to be a complex, controversial and ambivalent issue. But at the practical level, on the contrary, it seems quite clear. The 'Beaux-Arts' architects did not intend to imitate the past, whether it was Greek, Roman, or medieval Gothic. According to Joesph Rykwert, the 'Beaux-Arts' takes 'a wholly unhistorical, wholly aprioristic approach to design, in which the procedure of the architect is wholly autonomous, and the past a

⁵ The English translation and original French texts are from Banham, Reyner (1960). pp. 20, pp. 36.

mere repository of conventions'.⁶ That is to say, to 'Beaux-Arts' architects, the 'past', rather than being a set of traditional norms to be blindly followed, works as a reference serving the 'new' creation and 'present' requirements. Howard Robertson, who was trained in the Ecole des 'Beaux-Arts', made it clear that,

Engineering science, and the novel plan forms arising in modern problems, give the clue to design which may be as satisfactory in composition as any Roman *thermae*, and yet entirely fresh in character and expression.⁷

'Composition' is thus the means of the 'Beaux-Arts' by which the 'past' is used. As Zanten has pointed out, it 'has to do with the presentation of architectural ideas, but not with the generation of these architectural ideas itself', and is 'a method of architectural presentation nonetheless valid whatever the choice made'.⁸

The central act of 'composition' is to 'put elements together' as a unified whole – 'an act of unification'. This act is accomplished through a set of procedure: to choose a best solution to a given problem (*parti*); to select the proper elements, formally and functionally; and to appropriate them and combine them together in a certain way and for certain purposes. The process relies on two established aspects: to 'choose' depends upon a systematic construction of the resources; and to 'combine' the elements properly requires directing rules and principles. That is to say, while the choices are free and individual, the established basis for them is rational and universal.⁹

⁶ Rykwert, Joseph (1984). pp. 16.

⁷ Robertson, Howard (1924). pp. 147.

⁸ Zanten, David Van (1977). pp. 115.

⁹ Julien Guadet once said that 'composition cannot be taught'. In response, Neil Levine has pointed out,

Many 'Beaux-Arts' treatises contribute to the systematic constructions, which were particularly rich at the turn of the twentieth century. 'Composition' was first developed into French architecture during the nineteenth century.¹⁰ It began with teaching in ateliers of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and with Durand's treatise, *Précis of the Lectures on Architecture*, in the early nineteenth century, and became common in the second half of the century. In the early twentieth century, along with the spread of the 'Beaux-Arts' system outside France, discussions dealing 'composition' proliferated.¹¹ A number of books came out in the first three decades of the twentieth century, just before 'modernism' superseded the influence of 'Beaux-Arts' architecture. In 1904, Julien Guadet published the *Éléments et Théories de l'Architecture* in French, an informative manual for architectural design. In 1908, B. J. Robinson published *Architectural Composition* as 'an attempt to order and phrase ideas which hitherto have only felt by the instinctive taste of designers'.¹² In 1923, N. C. Curtis brought out the book in the same name but concerning 'plan of composition, a direction which, to Architecture at least, is universally conceded to be of prime importance'.¹³ In 1924, Howard Robertson's book *The Principles of Architectural Composition* came out, with the aim of rationalising the common principles to control the unity of composition. In 1926, Robert Atkinson and Hope Bagenal published the *Theory and Elements*

in the Ecole des 'Beaux-Arts', 'what the student could learn was the vocabulary, the method, and the taste needed to study and refine the composition and execute it with care.' Levine, Neil (1982). pp. 121.

¹⁰ Zanten, David Van (1977). Colquhoun, Alan (1991).

¹¹ Banham, Reyner (1960). pp. 14-22.

¹² Robinson, Beverly John (1908).

¹³ Curtis, Nathaniel Cortlandt (1923). Preface.

of *Architecture*, which tried to grasp the general laws for building structurally, functionally and aesthetically. In 1927, J. F. Harbeson compiled his series in the *Pencil Points* as *The Study of Architectural Design – with Special Reference to the Program of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design*, an instructional book which reinterpreted the principles and methods of 'composition' of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The last echo of the whole series, at least in Anglo-Saxon architecture, is probably the four-volume *Forms and Functions of Twentieth-century Architecture*, edited under auspices of the University of Columbia in 1952, and attempting to extend Guadet's thesis into a contemporary use. Talbot Hamlin claimed:

Guadet's *Eléments et théorie de l'architecture* was a great work and in fact still contains a wealth of information valuable today, for **the basis of architectural composition is unchanging and holds good in the present as it did in the past.** The last half century has brought many changes, however, and Guadet's book, destined for European architects of fifty or sixty years ago, is woefully inadequate for twentieth-century designers who must cope with new methods and new problems and must create types of buildings that did not then exist.¹⁴

Such books were not necessarily narrowly loyal to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts or the nineteenth century French Beaux-Arts tradition, but rather underlined and located its influence in different cultural and national contexts. Unlike the suggestion of some modernist historians, such as Sigfried Giedion, the 'Beaux-Arts' influence actually continued much longer. The trans-national penetration and endurance of the 'Beaux-Arts' system suggest that although it is a different organisation from 'modernism', they both share certain common ground of fitting to

¹⁴ Hamlin, Talbot Faulkner (1952). pp.xi.

the requirement of 'modernity'.

It seems impossible to generalise these diverse texts, since each book has its own purposes, approaches and interests. But leaving aside their specific contents and ideas and taking them as a part of the formation of architectural knowledge, we may still be able to outline a picture of them. Firstly, rules and resources are abstracted and generalised from various materials, without specifically addressing one style, one nation, or one region, although they are mostly from European architecture. Secondly, the rules that are elucidated are more practical and informative than theoretical and critical. These are intended to link to the activity of design uncoupled from any particular ideology. Thirdly, the supporting materials which are mostly from classical and historical buildings and constructions demonstrate the perpetuity of the rules, and reflect the 'Beaux-Arts' belief that: 'the present is a new growth but one that is vital because it springs from the deep roots of the past'.¹⁵

Fourthly, some contemporary projects and building types are included in order to show that the system itself is 'open' and is capable of adapting to the 'modern' conditions. Fifthly, the books were written by educators and were destined to guide architectural students and beginners to function as a primary foundation for architectural training and practice. In sum, the universality and instrumentality of 'composition' allows the 'Beaux-Arts' system to cope with the various requirements of

¹⁵ Ibid.

new building functions, styles and symbolisms. At this point, 'composition' might be responsible for the eclectic styles of the nineteenth century, but as Alan Colquhoun has pointed out, it itself is 'a means by which rules of design common to all styles can be established'.¹⁶

As the 'Beaux-Arts' system permitted 'all styles' of the eclecticism of the nineteenth century, it lent the 'means' to various symbolisations and 'national styles' in the twentieth century. Consider two comparable examples with Liang's high-rise complex. One is from 1920s America, where the 'Beaux-Arts' then prevailed. The Nebraska State Capitol of Lincoln, designed by an American neo-classical architect Grosvenor Goodhue in 1920, was 'described as the nation's first truly vernacular State Capitol'.¹⁷ (Fig. 2.1-2) 'The Tower, in its upward sweep, serves as a gnomon of the Heavens and a symbol of the more abstract conceptions of life derived from historic experience', with the capitals of the columns dressed by agricultural motifs, such as corn, wheat and sunflowers, and a figure of 'The Sower' on the top of the tower representing the identity of Nebraska's people, who were primarily agricultural.¹⁸



Fig. 2.1-2

The other case is from 1930s Soviet Union. The final proposal

¹⁶ Colquhoun, Alan (1991). pp.39.

¹⁷ The Nebraska State Capitol of Lincoln was subsequently built up from 1922 to 1932. Liang's teacher Paul P. Cret was invited to attend the competition, and failed to win the project. Choosing the Nebraska State Capitol has three reasons. First, N. C. Curtis used this project as a demonstration of his architectural principles in his book *Architectural Composition*, which seems a reference of Liang Sicheng. Second, it was selected as one of 'masterpieces of architecture in United States' and was regarded as 'representative American architecture' of the time. Third, the time when the building was designed and was constructed corresponds to the time when first Chinese architects including Liang Sicheng were trained in America.

¹⁸ Hoak, Edward Warren and Church, Willis Humphry (1930). pp. 115-125.



Fig. 2.1-3

for the Palace of the Soviets in Moscow in 1934 indicates the moment when Constructivism was suppressed and the issue of 'socialist content, national form' was raised.¹⁹ (Fig. 2.1-3) To symbolise the 'first triumph of Communism', the building was designed to be the tallest construction (415 metres high) in the world, the columns were crowned by the symbols of the Hammer and the Sickle, and a 100-metre high statue of Lenin was placed on the top. The three projects apparently have different elements, appearances, programmes (which Liang's lacks) and significations. At the same time, they share common ways – the means of 'composition' – of approaching the symbolisations, i.e. the ways of processing the symbolic elements, of composing the architectural and symbolic elements together and of controlling the thematic unity all the way from outline to detail. Therefore, the national forms or styles sustained by the 'Beaux-Arts' system, in turn, manifests that the 'Beaux-Arts' practice is trans-national.

2.1.2 Liang Sicheng's 'Grammar'

As in America and various other countries, Liang Sicheng's 'grammar' is a reinterpretation of the 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition' in a national context of China. Liang hardly used the term 'composition', nor directly referred to it, although he must have known it well from his training, his teacher Paul P. Cret, and his reference to N. C. Curtis's *Architectural Composition*. The reason for this is that 'composition' for him was a basic norm

¹⁹ Ikonnikov, Andrei (1988). pp. 170-171; pp. 197-202. Zou, Denong (2001). pp. 148-149.

and technique to follow and use rather than to discuss.²⁰ What Liang was interested in was a way of turning the traditional construction of Chinese architecture into a body of knowledge that was the equal of those in Europe and other parts of the world, and to find a correspondence between the tradition and the 'modern' system of architecture, and in consequence, to create 'new' architectural forms with a 'Chinese' character. As early as the 1930s, he noted the similarity between the construction system of traditional Chinese architecture and the 'international style'.²¹

The most remarkable character [of the 'international style'] is that the reasonable appearance comes from scientific structure. [...] However, those people who really know the new architecture should be aware that, although the materials are different, the newest modern construction shares the same principle with that of inherent Chinese architecture, – lifting framework first, and adding walls after. Because the principle is the same, many aspects of the 'international style' are like Chinese (or oriental) styles.²²

This observation, which indicates an appreciation of the latent potentiality of Chinese architecture to make the transition from the 'Beaux-Arts' to 'modernism', was seized upon in the 1950s by the intervention of the 'socialist content, national form' movement. Yet, the intention of accounting for 'modern' architecture by reference to traditional roots continued.

²⁰ In his article *Architecture and Art of Architecture* published in 1961, Liang took the principles of 'composition' – outline, proportion, scale, balance, rhythm, texture, colour and decoration – as basic skills to deal with architectural form, though he did not use the term of 'composition'. It is probably partly because 'composition' was condemned as 'formalism' at the time. Nonetheless, he rarely used the term in his 1930s and 1940s' writings.

²¹ The term 'international style' that I use here is a literal translation from Liang Sicheng's words in order to avoid the confusion with 'modernism' and somehow keep the loyalty to the his idea.

²² Liang, Sicheng (1935). "[国际式]最显著的特征, 便是由科学结构形成其合理的外表。[...] 但是对于新建筑由真正认识的人, 都应知道现代最新的构架法, 与中国固有建筑的构架法, 所用材料虽不同, 基本原则却一样, 一一都是先立骨架, 次加墙壁的。因为原则的相同, "国际式" 建筑有许多部分便酷似中国 (或东方) 形式。"

'Grammar', for Liang Sicheng, is a means of making the tradition of Chinese architecture locate itself in the present, both theoretically and practically. Like the 'Beaux-Arts' architects and theorists, Liang believed that architectural form was essentially made up of two parts: 'elements' or 'words', such as doors, windows, columns, beams, cornices, brackets, tiles, etc.; and the 'order' or 'grammar' which was employed in order to gather them together. While the classification of them was universal in every nation, the elements and components provided by and abstracted from traditional Chinese architecture in each category would make up the 'Chinese character':

I think that a nation's architecture, like its language, has a set of form and rule followed by the whole nation. In language, every nation creates its own words and grammar. In architecture, it creates a set of means or order for processing and joining material and component, and consequently gives birth to its unique architectural form. [...] European architecture has its own 'Five Orders', which has been carried on from ancient Greece and Rome up to now. [...] Chinese architecture also has our own 'Orders', which was called '*Fashi*' in Song Dynasty and '*Zuofa*' in Qing Dynasty.²³

Different nations' languages have plenty of words [whose words have] equivalent meanings [to words in other languages]. For instance, 'column' in English is equal in meaning to our '*zhu*'. Likewise, architectures from different nations have many components of similar function and meaning, but with different forms. [...] Pitch roofs, walls, columns, corridors, windows and openings compose many different buildings just as words compose different articles. But because grammar is different, Greek architecture is different from Italian, and Italian is different from ours.²⁴

²³ Liang, Sicheng (1986). pp. 191-192. It was the key lecture that Liang gave in the First Congress of Architectural Society of China in 1953, and was later published in *New Construction* in 1954. “我觉得一个民族的建筑同一个民族的语言文字同样地有一套全民族共同遵守的形式与规则。在建筑方面，他们创造了一套对于每一种材料、构件加工和交接的方法或法式，从而产生了他们特有的建筑形式。[...] 欧洲建筑有它的‘五种范式’，从希腊、罗马时代一直沿用到今天。[...] 中国的建筑也有我们的‘型范’，宋朝叫做‘法式’，清朝叫做‘做法’。”

²⁴ Liang, Sicheng Ibid. pp. 204. “在各民族的语言里都有许多意义相当的词，例如，英语里有“column”一词相当于我们的“柱”字的意思。在各国的建筑上也有许多构件具有同样的作用与意义，但是样子却不一样。有许多不同的建筑上的构件，有如各国语言中的字那样不同。把它们组织起来的方法也都不同，有如各国言语的文法不同。瓦坡、墙面、柱子、廊子、窗子和门洞组成



Fig. 2.1-5

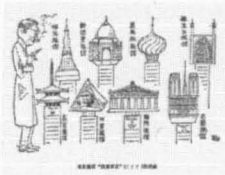


Fig. 2.1-6

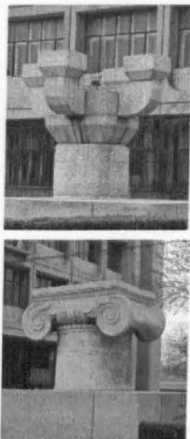


Fig. 2.1-7

The deduction of the architectural 'grammar' leads to Liang's assumption – the 'translatability' of architectural form between different nations. (Fig. 2.1-5, 6, 7) Zhang Bo, Liang's student, recalled how Liang exemplified the 'translation' process in his lecture given at the First Congress of the Architectural Society of China.

He [Liang] drew an outline of the St. Peter's Cathedral [of Rome]. First, he altered the Dome in the centre to the triple eaves of the Blessing Hall (*qiniandian*); second, amended the four small domes at the corners to the cube, double eaves and pyramidal-roofed (*chuangjian*) pavilions; third, weed out the pediment at the front entrance in western tradition, because traditional Chinese architecture never used gable as main entrance; and replaced it by the front of double-eave gable and hip roof (*xieshan*) with the pediments at two sides; fourth, changed the western style balustrades at the main porch to white-marble board with *wangzhu* on the top and *xumizuo* at the bottom; Fifth, redressed the colonnades in front according to the Long Corridor of the Summer Palace. At the end, Professor Liang said that by using Chinese language, speaking Chinese architectural words, employing traditional Chinese artistic means and forms, while modified and applied to the super-size St Peter's Cathedral, [we] would transform the masterpiece of Italian Renaissance into a work that would be fitting to Chinese taste.²⁵

This idea of 'translation' and its relation to architecture is very important for the argument of this thesis. It seems to propose an idea of different national architects or architectures divided by historical period into a systematic relation with language and above all with 'translation', as in Liang's terms. The difference

了许多不同的建筑物，也很像有字写成不同的文章。但因为文法的不同，希腊的就和意大利的不同，意大利的又和我们的不同。”

²⁵ Zhang, Bo (1993). pp. 70-71. “他草画了个圣彼得大教堂的轮廓图，先把中间圆顶（DOME）改成祈年殿的三重檐。第二步把四角小圆改成方形、重檐、钻尖亭子。第三步，把入口山墙（PEDIMENT）朝前的西洋传统作法彻底铲除，因为中国传统建筑从来不用硬山、悬山或歇山作为正门。把它改成重檐歇山横摆，使小山花朝向两侧。第四步，把上主门廊的高台上的西式女儿墙的酒瓶子栏杆，改成汉白玉栏杆，上有望柱，下有须弥座。甚至把上平台的大台阶，也按两侧走人，中留御路的形式。第五步，把环抱前庭广场的回廊和端亭也按颐和园长廊式改装，端头用重檐方亭加以结束。”

between architects can be reduced to the elements and the 'grammar' of architecture. Whatever the difference between the architectures, he supposed that they could be translated one into the other. For him, architecture exists at two levels – words (or elements) and 'grammar' (or 'orders') that is the way in which the elements are articulated. However, this would of course not work in characterising a language. Firstly, in language, 'words' do not have direct and transparent translations into other languages. 'Words' are related in their meaning with other 'words' in their languages. They are always at best overlapping. The French word 'conscient' has no direct translation in English. It overlaps two quite different words 'conscience' and 'consciousness'. That is to say, words in different languages cut up meaning in different ways. There is no such thing as a universal dictionary or lexicon, which could contain a universal set of meanings together with the local ways in which national language realised the meanings.

The second aspect involves Liang's idea of 'grammar'. A linguistic meaning of 'grammar' is equivalent to the rules of languages which govern its use. The rules of one language are not only different from the other languages. They are not comparable. This is because there is no universal grammar, and if there is no universal grammar, there is no logical possibility of directly comparing the grammars of particular languages.

In fact, Liang's whole idea of 'translation' can only use language as a vague and misleading metaphor. When he turns to

architecture, what in effect he is arguing is that there is a universal architectural 'grammar', and one in which direct comparison is not only possible but relatively simple. While Greek and Roman 'Orders' would be of course different from Chinese architecture, there will be 'Orders' underlying both. We see here that the very justification of 'national style' is logically dependent on their being a universal framework of architectural categories. On this point we completely disagree. By contrast, we would argue that we do not need a universal theory of architectural form. We have here a clear demonstration that 'modern' architecture in the 'Beaux-Arts' form, which we are identifying, is one which can easily provide symbolic elements which can be adjusted to any culture. Thus, insofar as the 'translation' occurs, the system that enables it undermines the very assumption – the homogeneity of the 'Chineseness' – at both formal and constructional levels.

Some contemporary Chinese scholars and critics think that Liang's theory on architectural language and architectural 'translatability' is a unique invention.²⁶ Zou Denong has commented:

[The idea of] Architectural linguistic and 'translatability' that Liang Sicheng put forward is a significant creation, but should be further testified, systematised and supplemented. [...] The issue that he proposed in the 1950s was not widely discussed until the 1980s, although the backgrounds and contents were different.²⁷

²⁶ Several scholars hold the point, see: Wu, Liangyong (1982);Fu, Chaoqing (1993);Liu, Xianjue (2000);Zou, Denong (2001).

²⁷ Zou, Denong (2001). pp. 155-156. “梁思成提出的建筑语言学 and “可译性”, 只是一个有意义的创意, 应当得到进一步论证、系统化和细节的补充。[...] 他在 1950 年代就提出了 1980 年代才广为谈论的话题, 尽管二者背景不同, 内容也不一样。”

Wang Jun, a journalist from Beijing, also agrees that, 'in the west, architecture was not linked to semiotics and linguistic until the 1970s and 80s'.²⁸ Undoubtedly, the 1970s and 1980s architecture in the 'west', to which both Zou and Wang referred, is 'postmodernism'. To decode the differences and similarities between Liang's architectural language and architectural semiotics is not the focus of this chapter. But what I want to point out is the comparison that was made between Liang's ideas and postmodernism. As far as Liang's 'grammar' is based upon the 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition', the comparison once again lends support to the argument put forward in Chapter One: the proliferation of 'postmodernism' in China corresponds with the continuity of the 'Beaux-Arts' influence and the absence of 'modernism' in Chinese architecture.

European and American architecture might not theoretically articulate the analogy of architecture and language during Liang's time, but the analogical comparison was not rare either. Rexford Newcomb, a contemporary of Liang in America, made the equivalence clear in 1933:

For years, books on architectural design and composition have presented the 'elements' of architecture – orders, windows, walls, columns, stairs, pediments, and the like – as though they were the fundamentals out of which designs are 'composed' in much the way that we put words together to form sentences in our lingual expression. This approach was perhaps all very well in a world of fixed categories where it appeared that most of the 'words' and 'grammar' of architecture had been perfected by our predecessors and that about the best we could do was to recompose these

²⁸ Wang Jun is a famous journalist based on Beijing. From 1993, he spent ten years on investigating the stories, struggles, decision-making processes and debates behind transformation of Beijing since Beijing became the capital of Chinese Communist regime in 1949. His journalist book, *Record of the City (chengji)* provides comprehensive details and is probably the most comprehensible research on this topic so far. Wang, Jun (2003). pp. 142.

'elements' to meet the demands of the day.²⁹

There is nothing to suggest that Liang knew Newcomb's words, and this is not the point. The similarity in Liang's and Newcomb's thinking simply confirms the penetration of the 'Beaux-Arts' practice in different countries and different architectural cultures.

2.1.3 Legitimacy of Architecture in China with Political Discourses

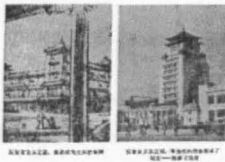


Fig. 2.1-8

The 'national form' that Liang Sicheng proposed, in terms of appearance and design approach, was not exceptional in the context of twentieth century Chinese architecture. We can find a number of such cases both before it and thereafter. (Fig. 2.1-8) Zou Denong has commented,

The two sketches are a rather precise prediction. It could be said, either for the 1950s' national form architecture, or for the 1990s' search for Chinese traditional and Chinese style architecture does not abandon the model. Nonetheless, this form is not entirely a unique invention of Liang Sicheng. If looking at the 1930s' 'Chinese inherent style', we can find out its root.³⁰

Generally speaking, it can be said that the waves of 'Chinese characteristic architecture' in the century climaxed in three periods: the heyday of the Nationalist Government in the 1920s and 1930s, the beginning of the Communist regime in the 1950s and 1960s, and the start of the Reform period in the 1980s and early 1990s.³¹ The recurrence is not only represented by the repetition of architectural 'forms' – although these are refined

²⁹ Rexford Newcomb (1933) Foreword to Ernest Pickering, *Architectural Design*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp. ix. Quoted from: Pai, Hyungmin (2002). pp.103.

³⁰ Zou, Denong (2001). pp.155. “这两张草图是一个相当准确的建筑预言，不论是 1950 年代的民族形式建筑，还是 1990 年代追求中国传统和中国气派的建筑，可以说都没有脱出这一范式。不过，这种形式并不完全是梁思成的独创，看一看 1930 年代的“中国固有之形式”，就可以找到它的根源...”

³¹ Fu, Chaoqing (1993). Zou, Denong (2001). Rowe, Peter G. and Kuan, Seng (2003).

and modified in each period —, but also unveils the consistent operation of the concept of 'new' and 'Chinese', which has acted as the other side of the 'western modern'. By this, we mean that the notion 'western modern' and the notion 'new' and 'Chinese' were constructed on the same ground — the continuity of the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition and the absence of 'modernism'. The question is: how could the 'Beaux-Arts' be legitimated as an orthodox convention with the promotion of the 'new' and 'Chinese' architecture? To understand this, we need to make a chronological examination of the legitimacy of the architectural profession in terms of political discourses that date back to the early twentieth century.

Historically, the creation of the 'Chinese character' in architecture paradoxically relied upon the 'Beaux-Arts' system. It was not associated originally with the promotion of Chinese nationality, nor even with the identification of the architectural profession. Rather, the movement was initiated by the 'western' missionary schools and foreign architects in China at the turn of the twentieth century. For the sake of 'Christianising the Chinese nation' and avoiding local hostility, missionary schools decided to adopt the traditional appearance of Chinese architecture as a way of showing the 'combination of the primes of Chinese culture and modern knowledge', and to attract young Chinese to the religion.³² The architects commissioned by the schools, such as

³² Lutz, Jessie Gregory (1971). Fu, Chaoqing (1993). Missionary schools, founded by western missionaries and sponsored by overseas investment, commenced modern education in China in the nineteenth century, and played a role in modern Chinese culture and society. In the first three decades of the twentieth century, nearly thirty missionary colleges and universities were set up. The curricula of the schools combined Biblical instructions and Chinese classics, with Chinese cultural studies, such as



Fig. 2.1-9



Fig. 2.1-10

Harry H. Hussey, Henry K. Murphy, etc., all came from America and Europe and were 'neoclassical architects'. Indeed, the 'Chinese style' (*zhongguo feng*) created by them was a Chinese version of 'neoclassicism', i.e. the 'Beaux-Arts' buildings which combined traditional features of Chinese architecture. (Fig. 2.1-9, 10) Henry K. Murphy, an active practitioner, stated his approach as follows:

In the face of the proved adaptability of classic and of Gothic architecture to the new and markedly differing requirements of modern building, it did not seem to me logical to deny to Chinese architecture, with its very simple plan, a similar adaptability.

[...]

I decided that we must start out with Chinese exteriors, into which we would introduce only such foreign features as were needed to meet definite requirement; [...] as a result, our completed buildings really are Chinese.³³

What Murphy called 'really Chinese' is undoubtedly not 'traditional Chinese'. Nor does the way in which he perceived and constructed this 'Chineseness' have anything to do with the construction tradition as it was in China. Instead, his combination of traditional features with 'modern' technologies and functions was based upon 'Beaux-Arts' principles, as many historians have pointed out. It is worthy of note that for Murphy and probably all the foreign architects, the issue of constructing the 'Chinese character' in architecture was not for them

Chinese painting, literature and poetry, and extensive modern subjects, such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, mechanics, world history and geography, sports, etc. In the nineteenth century, the students were mainly orphans adopted by churches and children from poor families. In the twentieth century, the student background varied. Many of them came from the families of merchants, bureaucrats and intellectuals. A number of their graduates became influential figures in various fields of twentieth century China, from politics, literature, to science and engineering.

³³ Murphy, Henry Killam (1928). Henry H. Murphy was trained in the University of Yale in the late nineteenth century, and came to China for the project of Yale-in-China in 1913. From then to 1935, he designed several missionary schools, including the Yenching University in Beijing and the Ginling College in Nanjing, and was invited by the Nationalist Government to consult and participate in the new city projects in capital Nanjing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Cody, Jeffrey W. (2001).

particularly a matter of addressing the representation of the 'Chinese nation'. It rather came out of a general belief in bringing the 'past' into present. Accordingly Murphy declared:

It had long been an article of my architectural faith that in every country having its own distinctive architectural development an architect – whether himself of that country or from outside – should, in building, preserve that style.³⁴

The association of the issue of architectural character with the task of differentiating the 'Chinese' from 'others', including the 'western', came later with the advent of the 'Chinese inherent style' (*zhongguo guyou shi*) in the 1920s and 1930s.

In architectural terms, the 'Chinese inherent style' was not very different from the 'Chinese style': they shared the same hybrid nature, stylistic character, as well as the 'Beaux-Arts' basis and traditional references.³⁵ Anne-Marie Broudehoux discovers:

Neotraditional buildings designed by foreigners were labelled 'Chinese style'; similar work by Chinese professionals was identified as 'Indigenous style'. Such designations were very important for Chinese architects, as each category carried different connotations in terms of authenticity. In reality, both styles remained very similar in their basic characteristics, and both approaches rarely ventured beyond stylistic and formal explorations.³⁶

The issue of 'authenticity' not only suggests a continuity between the two styles, but also suggests that the differentiation of the two styles was related to the 'authority' of the executors of them.

³⁴ Murphy, Henry Killam (1928). pp. 468.

³⁵ The Chinese architects in this practice received the same 'Beaux-Arts' training and some of them, such as Lü Yanzhi, etc., had worked for the foreign architects' projects in China. Broudehoux, Anne-Marie (2001).

³⁶ Ibid. pp.165-166.



Fig. 2.1-11



Fig. 2.1-12

Central to the emergence of the 'Chinese inherent style' was the sponsorship of the Nationalist Government. The term 'Chinese inherent style' first appeared in a document, the Planning of Capital Nanjing in 1929:

...the buildings in the administration area should adopt the **Chinese inherent style** to the most, and every merit of ancient [Chinese] palaces should be utilised.³⁷ (Fig. 2.1-11, 12)

Slightly earlier than date when the term was first literally used, the brief for the international competition for the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in 1925 – one of the first national projects of the Government – had made the same demand: every entry

must adopt ancient style of Chinese architecture and has uniqueness and monumentality, or **creates a new style in terms of the spirit of Chinese architecture**.³⁸

From the 1920s to 1930s, a similar requirement was made of projects sponsored by the Government, such as the National Library of Peking, the new administrative centre in the capital Nanjing, and in the urban areas of Shanghai and Guangzhou.

This shift in 'patron' did not change the way in which the 'Chinese character' was represented in architecture, but instead designated 'new' tasks for it. That is the tasks of articulating the difference between 'China' and 'others' and legitimating the power of the government. The Construction Committee of

³⁷ Lai, Delin (1995). pp.57. “政治区之建筑物，宜尽量采用中国固有之形式，凡古代宫殿之优点，务当一一施用。”

³⁸ Fu, Chaoqing (1993). pp. 116. Lai, Delin (1995). pp. 56. “采用中国古式而含有特殊与纪念的性质，或根据中国建筑精神特创新格者。”



Fig. 2.1-13

Central District of Shanghai explained inauguration in the following way: (Fig. 2.1-13)

1. The City Hall is the administration centre of the whole city, and a spectacle for insiders and outsiders. Its building style should represent Chinese culture. If adopting other countries' architecture, how could it esteem the constitution of the nation and conform the vision of overseas Chinese?

2. Architectural style embodies the cultural spirit of a nation, so every nation's architecture represents the character of the nationality. The tendency of recent Chinese architecture to European and American should be rectified, in order to promote the responsibility of indigenous culture. The City Hall that adopts Chinese style sufficiently shows the dignity to the citizens.³⁹

Chinese architects also took architecture as a sign of the strength of a nation. In 1929, when the first professional organisation, the Shanghai Architectural Society, was set up, it was claimed that:

It is an undeniable fact that the matter of architecture is a token of a nation's culture. In referring to the shift of prosperity and decline of a national culture, no one who observes these shifts does not cite the appearances of buildings.⁴⁰

Opponents as well as proponents of traditional Chinese architecture held the same point. For instance, in 1924, Liu Shiying argued that 'the buildings of a nation indeed represent its nationality', and that if 'we look back at ours, they are sluggish. A feeling of decadence and depression was often projected on [our] buildings'.⁴¹ This kind of widely held views led to a common

³⁹ Fu, Chaoqing (1993). pp.149. Lai, Delin (1995). pp. 58. "1. 市政府为全市政机关, 中外观瞻所系, 其建筑格式, 应代表中国文化, 苟采用他国建筑, 何以崇国家之体制, 而兴侨旅之观感。2. 建筑式样为一国文化精神之所寄, 故各国建筑, 皆有表示国民性之特点。近来中国建筑, 侵有欧美之趋势, 应力加矫正, 以提倡本国文化之责任。市政府建筑, 采用中国格式, 足示市民以矜式。"

⁴⁰ Shanghai Architectural Society (1930). "夫建筑一术, 为国家文化之表征, 此殆不可讳言之事实; 论一国文化之隆替, 莫不举建筑物之表现形式以观其究竟。"

⁴¹ Lai, Delin (1995). pp. 49. "一国之建筑物, 实表现一国之国民性。[...] 回顾吾, 暮气沉沉, 一种颓靡不振之精神, 时常映现于建筑。"

acceptance that Chinese architecture had a splendid 'past' but had dropped behind in modern times, due to the decline in national strength. Now it became important to 'renew' the tradition in order to make it fit with the 'modern' times rather than to just repeat the conventions of the old tradition.

We hope to continue the heritage of eastern architectural technology, to integrate the new laws with the old construction means, to uplift the real spirit of our nation's inherent art with western material civilisation, and to create the architectural form of the time.⁴²

Two points should be highlighted in regard to this statement. First, 'the architectural form of the time' is a consciously constructed hybrid, which neither intends to keep the 'old' intact nor possesses homogeneous 'Chineseness'. Second, the problem that the 'Chinese inherent style' faced is not the confrontation between 'modernisation' and tradition, but was 'modern architecture' taking on that 'tradition' for certain purposes. This thesis is supported by the facts: the training of Chinese architects was based upon the 'Beaux-Arts' education rather than traditional craftsmanship; and therefore, the associated building types were 'modern' ones which had not occurred in traditional Chinese society.

In practical terms, the task of upholding political significance of architecture had a social background. When Chinese architects emerged in the 1920s, the Chinese architectural profession was very small, certainly much smaller than the number of foreign

⁴² Shanghai Architectural Society (1930). pp.42. “愿赓续东方建筑技术之余荫，以新的学理，参融旧有建筑方法；以西洋物质文明，发扬我国固有文艺之真精神，以创造适应时代要求之建筑形式。”

architects in China.⁴³ New building types, such as banks, hotels, theatres, railway stations, etc., tended to be designed by foreign architects and were in any case largely located in the 'treaty ports'. Domestic buildings, on the other hand, continued all over the country to be built according to traditional construction norms. Zhang Bo, a graduate of 1934, recalled that the Third Class (1928) of the Architectural Faculty at the National Central University only had two students. His class, the Fifth (1930), had eleven, and four of them could not find a job after graduation in 1934.⁴⁴ If the situation is compared with foreign architect offices in China, it is found that the practice of Chinese architects came much later and on a much smaller scale. In the case of Shanghai, foreign architectural offices were started up in the 1890s, whilst Lü Yanzhi and Liu Dunzhen respectively set up their own in 1921. Indeed, by 1936, only 12 out of 39 registered architectural offices were Chinese.⁴⁵ The causes of this situation were manifold and the figures do not necessarily suggest a conflict between the Chinese and foreign firms. They do, nevertheless, indicate that Chinese architects felt the need to obtain an identifiable position in the society.⁴⁶

⁴³ In the 1920s and 1930s, after the abroad-trained Chinese architects returned back, the whole professional system was locally established. The architectural schools (1926), architect offices (1921), professional organisations (1929), architectural periodicals (1932) and research institutes (1930) were subsequently set up.

⁴⁴ Zhang, Bo (1993). pp. 10-11. Zhang Bo first attended the National Northeastern University in 1930. After the Japanese invasion, the school was closed in 1931. Zhang and his four classmates were merged into the Fifth Class of the National Central University, which originally had six students.

⁴⁵ Zhao, Guowen (1987). pp. 72-73. Wu, Jiang (1997). pp. 152.

⁴⁶ What I mean here is the recognition of the profession rather than individuals. Some architects, such as Liang Sicheng, Guan Songsheng, etc., who came from good family background, had well-established social network. In addition, educated people were generally and traditionally respected in Chinese society. My assumption that Chinese architects needed an identifiable image is supported by the memoir of Zhang Bo, in which he counted four reasons of designing the eclectic Chinese style: the national consciousness of individual; **making a distinctive image of the office for business**; the intention of the Nationalist Government; and the rise of *Guo Cui Pai* (Chinese culture quintessence school). Zhang, Bo (1993). pp.15.



Fig. 2.1-14.



Fig. 2.1-15

To work on the government's projects and to collaborate with the official ideology lent support to the status of Chinese architects. Lü Yanzhi's Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in 1929 was a typical example. The Mausoleum was one of the first 'inherent style' projects and was regarded as a milestone of modern Chinese architecture. (Fig. 2.1-14) Certainly when compared with the Peking National Library designed by Danish architect V. Leith-Moller at the same time and with the same approach,⁴⁷ it gained more critical support. (Fig. 2.1-15) But these 'credits' were less due to the 'authenticity' of the project of representing any Chinese tradition than to two external factors: the political nature of the project and the visibility of Chinese architects.⁴⁸ Sun Yat-sen, who had died in 1925, was the founder of the *Guomingdang* and Republican China. The construction of the Mausoleum was part of a national event. (Fig. 2.1-16) Lü Yanzhi, aged 31, won the first prize via the international competition. It was the first time a Chinese architect had undertaken an influential project, and it inaugurated the involvement of Chinese architects in official construction. Zhang Zhigang, Lü's contemporary, commented:



Fig. 2.1-16.

Up till the establishment of the Republic of China, Europeanisation had penetrated into the East. Since our pioneer, the architect Mr. Lü Yanzhi, designed the President's mausoleum, **the voice of architecture began to be heard by the public in our society. Architecture was then no longer [just] taken as a craftsman's work, but paid slightly more attention.** [...] Architecture was therefore important in transforming the social customs of a nation, and cultivating the disposition of people.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Fu, Chaoqing (1993). pp. 120-121.

⁴⁸ Liang Sicheng once criticised both projects of their inaccuracy of appropriating traditional constructions. Liang, Sicheng (1935).

⁴⁹ Zhang, Zhigang (1933). pp. 35. “迨夫民国成立，欧化东渐，自故建筑师吕彦直先生为先，总理

Undoubtedly, the point of Zhang Zhigang is to identify Lü Yanzhi as not only an architect who can design in accordance with the demands of 'Chinese' architecture, but also to identify him in terms of architectural profession as someone who can now lead architects to influence the public more than a craftsman, and to become a source of not only 'new' taste amongst people, but also someone who can assist in constructing national values. Even if it was true, one would have to note that this rhetoric was common also in Europe⁵⁰ and in the USA. Clearly it relates to the professional status of architects and such has nothing to do with 'Chinese' architecture.

The pitfalls of the 'Chinese inherent style' seemed evident, and they required proper justification. The Shanghai Library and Museum confessed that 'because of purely adopting Chinese style, the construction [was] costly, and [the building] [was] not very practical'.⁵¹ Over-shooting the budget was serious. For instance, the estimate for the Sun Yat-sen's Mausoleum was 300,000 *yuan*, but the actual cost was 3,384,000 *yuan* (1929) - more than ten times what was budgeted and 80% as of the total financial income of the Shanghai municipal government in 1928 (4,276,000 *yuan*).⁵² In general, all architects face the problem of budget overrunning, and each architect needs proper explanations of it. To the patriots' projects, they normally justify

设计陵墓后，建筑之呼声，始能一振社会人士之耳鼓，于是不复以梓工大匠之事视之，而稍加注意焉。[...] 是建筑足以转移国家之民风，陶养人民之性情矣。”

⁵⁰ Bergdoll, Barry (2000).

⁵¹ Fu, Chaoqing (1993).

⁵² Lai, Delin (1995). pp. 58-59. Basically all architects face the problem of overrunning budget.

themselves by political correctness. Liang Sicheng's comment typically reflected this attitude. On the one hand, he queried the expense and the imitative and eclectic approach of the 'Chinese inherent style':

It [the 'palace style'] imitates the form of Qing Palace and the layout and structure of western classicism. [...] It is a reluctant marriage of the eastern and western systems, which both are belonged to the past. It is very like the 'neoclassical' architecture prevailing in Europe and America. Because the cost is highly expensive, it is not often suitable for the ordinary financial situation in China, and hence cannot be generally employed.⁵³

On the other hand, however, he insisted upon the actual concept by defending it for the 'invaluable significance [in] raising the Chinese consciousness'. The ambivalence, which I believe many architects had then, proved that the 'Chinese inherent style' was not justified on the basis of architectural style or preservation of 'tradition', but rather by patriotism. Insofar as the 'Chinese inherent style' kept the line of the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition, 'Beaux-Arts' practice was officially and politically legitimated.

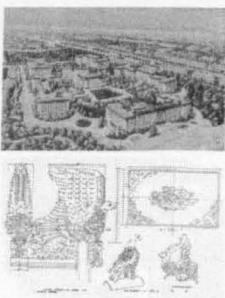


Fig. 2.1-17

In the 1950s, the issue of creating 'new' and 'Chinese' architecture was raised again, but now in the name of 'socialist content, national form'. (Fig. 2.1-17) As discussed in Section 1.2.2, the 'new' architectural theories and the 'new' state ideology did not initiate a break from previous concepts and practices. Instead, they reinforced the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition in Chinese architecture. Peter Rowe and Seng Kuan have argued:

⁵³ Fu, Chaoqing (1993). pp. 160. I translate Liang's term '*fanggu*' into 'neoclassical' due to its architectural definition. In Chinese, '*fangguo*' literally means emulating antiquity or pseudo-classicism. "在形式上它['宫殿式']模仿清代宫衙, 在结构及平面上它又仿西洋古典派的普通组织。[...]它是东西制度勉强的凑合, 这两制度大多属于过去的时代, 它最像欧美所盛行的 '仿古' 建筑。因为糜费侈大, 它不常适用于中国一般经济情形, 所以不能普遍。"

It was only a small step to monumentality and architecture with more than a passing resemblance to the past, much as the Nationalists had favoured almost twenty years earlier. But there was a fundamental theoretical difference in denotative intent, turning on the distinction between popularization (the Communists) and out-and-out celebration of past glories (the Nationalists).⁵⁴

There is something problematic in this quotation. The 'small step to monumentality' had already been taken by the doctrine of 'socialist realism' and its official interpretation. The authors are correct to remark that it repeated the nationalist position of twenty years early. Nonetheless, their account of what they call the 'difference in denotative intent' seems unclear. It seems reasonable to refer to what Roland Barthes would differentiate from denotation, which is connotation. Even then, the question is through which architectural mechanism connotation is implied. This is the way in which we are dealing with the early twentieth century 'Chinese style' architecture, or the 'Chinese inherent style' architecture, or within various 'stages' of communist architecture, or within architecture in the 1980s and 1990s. The 'signification' of 'Chineseness' never quite leaves arena of what we are calling the 'Beaux-Arts' possibility of national 'signification'.

That the demands of popularisation rejected modernism and embraced 'neoclassicism' was not peculiar to China. We can find the same situation in the USSR and Europe from 1930 to 1945. Eric Hobsbawm looks into the prevalence of 'realism' in public arts under the dictatorships in Europe at that time and

⁵⁴ Rowe, Peter G. and Kuan, Seng (2003). pp. 97.

comments that '[o]n ideological and practical grounds, they [the governments] preferred arts that would appeal to the public, or at least be readily understood by it.'⁵⁵ Whatever the truth of this, certainly in the 1950s, the construction in China created a significant role for architects in the state sponsorship of building and especially in relation to public housing and urban growth, which inevitably reflected the priorities of economy. The architects were seen to have an important role in the construction of socialism especially in the construction of urban and infrastructural form. Nevertheless, the increased significance in the role of architects seemed to require the increasing role in the ideological supervision of the nature and direction of architecture and profession.

The situation meant that the CCP exercised control over architectural categories, including the 'new' and the 'Chinese', and initiated a struggle over the architectural 'line' which was to be taken. Clearly despite being ideologically and theoretically dominant, the idea of 'socialist content, national form' was not implemented smoothly in practice. One reason for this was that the eagerness to transform the agrarian country to an industrial one demanded rapid and large-scale construction. The contradiction between the economic and social reality and these political ambitions hastened the defeat of attempts to adopt traditional forms and elements, which had occurred in the 1930s. In 1955, two years after the 'socialist content, national form' movement commenced, its 'uneconomic costs' were

⁵⁵ Hobsbawm, Eric (1995). pp.12.

condemned.⁵⁶ The 'architectural principle' was put forward and promulgated as a parallel guideline.

On the 28th of March 1955, the People's Daily issued an editorial, *Fighting against Waste in Construction*. On behalf of the Central Committee and the Central Government, it alleged that:

The principle of architecture, as the Party and the Government have already pointed out, is that **every construction should be functional, economic and beautiful when the circumstances allow. [...] What is the main mistake of current construction? This is not taking account of economic principle. [...]** One reason for the waste in construction is the formalist and revivalist thoughts among some of our architects. Many architects do not want to do standard design, and regard it as a third class job. They want to do individual design, to design big buildings, luxurious buildings. **Under the pretext of opposing 'structural-ism' and 'inheriting traditional architecture', they develop an approach to 'revivalism' and 'aestheticism'.**⁵⁷

Liang Sicheng was denounced for advocating 'revivalism' and so were architects who adhered to this trend. Construction costs dropped radically, and in a number of cases the price was paid for in terms of a sacrifice of quality, not to mention decoration in

⁵⁶ In September 1954, Zhou Enlai censored the waste in constructions and the 'overly lavish construction' for 'willing exhausting the limited resources of the country' in the Government Report. Zhou did not particularly address to architectural style and architectural design, but to management, construction standard, etc. Later, in November of the year, under the leadership of Khrushchev, the architectural style, design approach and aesthetics of the 'national form' during Stalin time were criticised at the All-Union Conference of Soviet Architects. The Chinese delegation attended the meeting and brought back the critiques. In the early of 1955, the 'anti-waste' campaign began to take place in Chinese architecture. According to published calculations, the waste was severe. For instance, in the construction of the Headquarter of the Military Commission of the Central Committee, the glazed-tiled big roof cost as nearly ten times as normal pitch roof. The fees for the big roofs and extra decorations and equipments in Beijing Xijiao Hotel could build more than 10,000 square metres housing. Liu, Ting (1989). Zou, Denong (2001). pp. 198 -200. Rowe, Peter G. and Kuan, Seng (2003). pp. 97.

⁵⁷ Editorial (1955). Quoted from: Yang, Yongsheng (2003). pp.3-5. “建筑的原则，党和政府早就指出了。这就是一切建筑都应该做到适用、经济并在可能的条件下注意美观。[...] 当前建筑中的主要错误倾向是什么呢？就是不重视建筑的经济原则。[...] 建筑中浪费的一个来源是我们某些建筑师中间的形式主义和复古主义的建筑思想。许多建筑师在设计中不愿意从事标准设计，认为这是‘三等’工作，想搞单独的设计，而且要设计大建筑、要设计豪华的建筑。他们往往在反对‘结构主义’和‘继承古典建筑遗产’的借口下，发展了‘复古主义’、‘唯美主义’的倾向。” The words in bold are from the original text. I do not have adequate documentary elements in my hand at this moment. But since the Editorial seems more concerned with 'socialist architecture' than 'Chinese architecture', it deserves a further comparable research on architectural production in East Germany and in China during the socialist time.

functional buildings, such as housing, factories, hospitals, etc.⁵⁸

Theoretically, the economic principle was not set against 'socialist content, national form'. In 1957, Zhou Rongxin, the President of the Society of Chinese Architecture, made it clear at the Second Congress of National Representatives of the Members of the Society:

We opposed revivalism in the past, but we never opposed national form. On the contrary, we should correctly inherit and uplift national form in architectural creation. What we oppose is the misunderstanding of national form, the blind imitation and copying of the ancient architectural form without considering today's time and the needs of people's life, today's technological condition and material capacity, and today's economic feasibility, etc., which people can not accept. Our opposing revivalism is to oppose its refusal to take in advanced theories and the experiences of foreign countries, its refusal to take in the foreign things useful to us.⁵⁹

In principle, Zhou's announcement was no different from Liang Sicheng's and those in the 1920s and 1930s. Insofar as 'socialist content, national form' was insisted upon, the 'architectural principle' did not rescue 'modernism'. The 'Beaux-Arts' system was maintained to cope with a simplification of building forms, the requirements of new functions – such as factories and housing, and even applications of certain 'modernist' means and technologies – such as mass production and standard designs. In 1959, four years after the 'anti-waste campaign', the 'national form' returned in the Ten Grand Projects

⁵⁸ In the English literatures, Peter Rowe and Seng Kuan's *Architectural Encounters with Essence and Form in Modern China* could be the one that provides the most details on this struggle. In Chinese literatures, there are many, such as Liu, Ting (1989). Zou, Denong (2001).pp. 198-210.

⁵⁹ Zhou, Rongxin (2003). It was originally published in *Architectural Journal (Beijing)*, 03/1957. “过去我们反对复古主义，但我们从来没有反对过民族形式。恰恰相反，在建筑创作上我们应该正确地继承和发扬民族形式，我们所反对的是对于民族形式的误解，不顾今天的时代和人民生活需要，今天的技术条件、材料性能，以及今天的经济可能等等，一味地按照古代的建筑形式模仿抄袭，这是人民所不能接受的。我们反对复古主义，是反对它的拒绝接受外国的先进理论和经验，拒绝接受对于我们有用的外国东西。”



Fig. 2.1-18.



Fig. 2.1-19.

in Beijing for the tenth anniversary of the establishment of socialist China, with certain simplifications.⁶⁰ (Fig. 2.1-18, 19)

This recurrence enhanced the political correctness of pursuing the 'national form', monumentality and symbolisation in architecture and the orthodoxy of the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition. The architectural situation in China seemingly suggested that the prevalence of the 'Beaux-Arts' practice was not just because it met certain ideological and theoretical demands, but also because it fitted practical operations in modern conditions.

Except for work on monumental edifices, the daily practice of Chinese architects seemed to amount to technical acts. In 1952, according to the Soviet Union which categorised architecture as a technical speciality, China launched a wholesale reform of the architectural system. The reform did not substantially change the curricula of architectural training and the nature of architectural practice, but reorganised the working conditions of architects. In this regard, four aspects were effective. First, all design institutes were nationalised and became state-owned 'production units' (*shengchan danwei*) on the same level as the construction companies. Second, design institutes integrated all building-related professions, including architecture, civil engineering, equipment engineering, etc. In short, architecture was defined as a branch of construction engineering. Third, architectural design was organised on a collective basis. The authority of projects was dissociated from any individual

⁶⁰ A number of scholars have contributed to the analysis. See: Zhao, Guowen (1987); Liu, Ting (1989); Fu, Chaoqing (1993); Zou, Denong (2001); Li, Xiaodong and Chong, Keng Hua (2003); Rowe, Peter G. and Kuan, Seng (2003).

architects. Here we have to distinguish the situation in China and modernist promotion. It may be under communism that the critique of individualism increasingly attacked the individual origin of architectural design in favour of a design team who was more collective. But it was quite different from the transformation of the profession envisaged by modernist theorists, such as Walter Gropius or Sigfried Giedion. The socialist collectivisation of 'labour', including to some extent the labour of the professions, came about from a belief that whatever it was produced under the conditions of modernity is more correctly described as a collective labour. Gropius and others were more concerned with collective character of designers as an agent that 'managed' the process of enormous contribution to the design of already collectivised elements of architecture.

Last, without 'modernist' theories, the 'standardisation' of architectural design was to a considerable degree implemented. In 1952, inspired by Soviet architecture and because of the shortage of design capacity, 'standard designs' began to be compiled.⁶¹ From then on, even during the Cultural Revolution, the compiling work was systematically carried out at different scales at national, regional and provincial levels. Standard designs not only were necessary references and tools in daily practice, but also substituted part of the design work, especially those on construction details.⁶² (Fig. 2.1-20) This is a practical

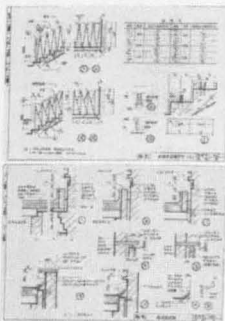


Fig. 2.1-20.

⁶¹ Zou, Denong (2001). pp.96. Zhang, Ji and Wang, Tao (2001). pp. 124-125.

⁶² China has a well-established system of standard design. Basically, there are two types of the references. One is 'general', including all the information needed, such as typical plans, circulations, suitable structures, elevations, cases, etc. The most influential one of this kind from 1960s to the 1990s was the three-volume Reference of Architectural Design. The other is the 'manual of standard design',

reason for the uniformity of Chinese architecture and cities, upon which basis the 'postmodernist' critique of 'modernism' gained a sympathetic response in the 1980s.

The system of course had its advantages and disadvantages and also its own particular conditions. The point is that when it was put under the pressure of the speed and tight budget constraints stated as the slogan 'more, faster, better and more economically constructed socialism', design became subservient to construction (*sheji wei shigong fuwu*). This reversed relationship diminished the status of the architectural profession and reduced architectural design to mere mechanical tasks. In 1957, Chen Zhanxiang complained in his big character poster (*dazibao*) *Architect or Drawing Machine*:

Architectural design should be **creative** brainwork. This is the nature of the profession. Failing to acknowledge it, our work will definitely go wrong. [...] Although all the number of square metres constructed is large enough to shock any advanced country, [the quality] is still far away from the international standard. [...] I hope the leaders genuinely understand our profession. It seems that it is a misunderstood profession, otherwise how is it that we become drawing machines?⁶³

Chen's critique was probably acute, but it represented a common call of Chinese architects for a proper understanding of

which include all the components, joints and construction details. In practice, most of the details were not designed by the architects but were referred to them in a regulated format. The references are basically arranged in three categories: the National Standard (*guobiao*); Regional Standard, such as Northwest Standard (*xibeibiao*), Middle South Standard (*zhongnanbiao*), etc.; and Provincial Standard (*shengbiao*), in order to meet specific requirements – climate, materials and construction conventions -- in different locations of the projects.

⁶³ Chen, Zhanxiang (2003). The original text was published in *Architectural Journal* (Beijing), 09/1957.

“建筑设计应当是创造的脑力劳动，这是我们这一行的基本特征。不承认这一基本特征工作准出毛病。[...] 尽管平方米数足够吓倒任何先进国家，离开国际水平依然甚远，[...] 我希望领导真正的了解我们这项行业，看来这是被人误解的一个行业，否则我们怎么会变成描图机器呀！”

and a respect for the nature of the profession.⁶⁴ The previous struggle to differentiate architecture from craftsmanship now turned into an attempt to identify the distinctiveness of architecture from general engineering.

The defence of the distinction of architecture from mere engineering was not apparent. In most cases, it was folded into the emphasis on the artistic dimension of architecture. If we read through Liang Sicheng's *Architecture of Motherland*, we will be aware that he not only tried to demonstrate the necessity of tradition for creating a 'new' and 'Chinese' architecture, but also attempted to persuade his audience that 'architecture is an important art rather than [just] a simple engineering'. This point went unheard after the 'anti-waste' campaign, and instead the relationship between the 'artistic expression' and utility of architecture needed to be resettled. In 1955, Zhai Lilin, a professor at Tongji University, published an article *On the Art of Architecture, Beauty and National Form*. He wrote:

Architecture serves human beings in two aspects: material [function] and immaterial [beauty]. The former is primary, and the latter is secondary. It is both the means of living and the device of production, and has a nature belonging to the ideological superstructure.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Chen Zhanxiang was later labelled as a 'rightist'. The big character post was one of the evidences for his 'rightist' activities. Nevertheless, during the short time of 'a hundred schools of thought' (*baijia zhengming*) in 1957, a number of architects expressed the same will, but in more modest way. Yang, Yongsheng (2003).

⁶⁵ Zhai, Lilin (2003). pp. 96. "建筑是从物质及精神两方面为人类服务,前者是主要的,后者是从属的。它既是生活资料和生产手段,又具有属于上层建筑的意识形态的性质。" The original text was published in *Architectural Journal* (Beijing), 01/1955.

It may seem to everyone that architecture has an inherent social value, although in Europe and the USA, architects have disputed what it is for centuries, usually in the form of trying to define what the origins are. Abbé Marc-Antoine Laugier asserted that the origin and therefore architectural function were to provide human with shelter. Subsequent architectural theorists may have disputed him, but few have descended from the view that the origin and therefore the nature of architecture are to perform some useful social function. Hegel in his lectures on aesthetics is one of a few philosophers to insist that

The importance of the two aspects varied in different building types:

In terms of the nature of architecture, industrial and agricultural buildings obviously take function over beauty, but monumental buildings above all take beauty into account. [...] When architecture serves human beings by function, it is equal to every class; but when it serves human being by appearance [beauty], it will appear differently.⁶⁶

Zhai's account was a sort of reinterpretation of the 'Beaux-Arts' theory with the rhetoric of Soviet and Chinese Marxism.⁶⁷ In 1923, N. C. Curtis, a 'successor' of Guadet in America, wrote in the same tone:

The nature of architecture is determined by two objects. The first of these objects is the satisfaction of the requirements of use; the second is the satisfaction of the requirements of beauty. Since the purposes of different types of buildings vary greatly, it follows that these two essential characteristics of use and beauty do not exist in the same degree, but alternate in importance within wide limits. Thus in buildings intended solely for use, material necessities dominate; whereas in edifices designed to evoke certain emotions or intellectual impressions through their external form or ornamentation, esthetic [sic] qualities would be given the first place.⁶⁸

Then he declared that:

...although the requirements of habitation and the satisfaction of material necessities are the first and earliest objects of Architecture, the satisfaction of esthetic [sic] needs is that which essentially characterises it – as Architecture'.⁶⁹

the origin and therefore the nature of architecture must be found internally to architecture and not to external function of this society. In China, this kind of debate has not strongly occurred.

⁶⁶ Ibid. “从建筑的性质上来看，工业、农业建筑等显然是功能远重于美观，纪念性建筑则首先注重美观。” (pp. 93) “当建筑以功能为人类服务时，对于各个阶级是一视同仁的；但是当建筑以美观为人类服务时，却呈现出不同的情形。” (pp.95)

⁶⁷ In Zhai Lilin's article, he quoted the words from Soviet theorists six times, from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and Mao Zedong twelve times. He did not mention any 'Beaux-Arts' theorists.

⁶⁸ Curtis, Nathaniel Cortlandt (1923). pp.1.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Nevertheless, Zhai did not make an announcement like this. He reserved the importance of artistic aspect for architecture through the legitimacy of pursuing 'national form'.

The double character of architecture determines that architectural knowledge consists of two kinds: the science of architecture and the art of architecture. [...] The concept of 'national form' belongs to the category of art rather than that of science. [...] If architecture wants to present beauty, wants to play the spiritual role serving people, it has to adopt certain national forms.⁷⁰

Not everyone agreed with Zhai Zhilin. But insofar as the debates were backed by state policies, the theoretical divergences could not 'iron out' the contradictions of the architectural guidelines. Many practising architects passively resisted theoretical discussions:

Now that our architectural design was to serve socialist constructions, its nature should be socialist, and should conform to the requirements of reality.⁷¹

The 'anti-rightist campaign' suspended architectural discussion for about two years. In 1959, construction of the Ten Grand Buildings in Beijing once again triggered off the discussion of architectural art and form, which was the last architectural discussion before the onset of the reform period in the late 1970s.⁷² Liang Sicheng cautiously readdressed his point:

Although architecture is a science, it is not just a purely technological science, but rather a synthesis with more or less (sometimes at a very high degree) artistic nature. [...] Architectural

⁷⁰ Zhai, Lilin (2003). "建筑的双重性格决定了有关建筑的知识分为两大种类：建筑科学和建筑艺术。" (pp.96) "[所以]民族形式这个概念是属于艺术范畴的概念，而不是属于科学范畴的概念。" (pp.103) "建筑如果要想表现美，如果要想发挥其从精神上为人们服务的作用，就不能不采用一定的民族形式。" (pp.104)

⁷¹ Yang, Tingbao Ibid. pp. 33. "我们的建筑设计既然是为社会主义建设服务，那么他的性质就应该是社会主义的，而且亦是应该复合现实要求的。"

⁷² Liu, Xiufeng (1979).

art is different from other arts. It cannot exist independent of utility, construction structure and economy. Although it has a large influence on the appearance of cities, its art is subjected to the consideration of usability, engineering structure and economy, and is derivative. [...] In brief, architectural creation [...] is a very complicated, highly synthetic artistic creation.⁷³

Taking architecture as an art was itself a tradition of the 'Beaux-Arts'. Apart from the historical origin, the 'Beaux-Arts' appreciation of architecture as an art was associated with the task of differentiating the architect from the craftsman and the engineer, as Egbert addressed:

From the academic point of view, architecture is regarded essentially as a fine art in which principle of formal composition stemming from the classical tradition are considered of first importance. Both the craftsman-builder and the engineer, on the contrary, have tended to give emphasis less to such formal design than to utilitarian and structural ends, with the craftsman-builder coming from a background of handicraft and of folk traditions in art, and the engineer from a training in technology and applied mathematics.⁷⁴

Although the Chinese architects' point was not entirely identical to that of the French academics, and the art of architecture was regarded as secondary, the insistence upon it somehow imbued with the same intention. Albeit altered to suit the framework of state policies and ideologies, the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition lent support not only to architectural theories and design approaches, but also to the identification of the architectural profession.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the issue of architecture with a

⁷³ Liang, Sicheng (1986). "建筑虽然是一门科学,但它又不仅仅是单纯的技术科学,而往往又是带有或多或少(有时是极高度的)艺术性的综合体。(pp. 361) [...] 建筑的艺术和其他艺术有所不同,它是不能脱离适用、工程结构和经济的问题而独立存在的。它虽然对于城市的面貌起着极大的作用,但是它的艺术是从属于适用、工程结构和经济的考虑的,是派生的。[...] 总而言之,建筑的创作 [...] 是一种非常复杂的、高度综合性的艺术创作。(pp. 369)"

⁷⁴ Egbert, Donald Drew (1980).

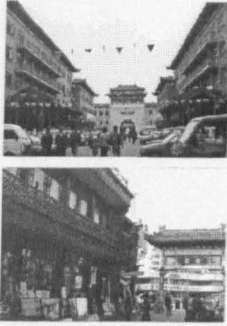


Fig. 2.1-21

'Chinese character' re-emerged in academic discussions and boomed in practice, when state policy shifted towards the market economy and an opening up to the outside world. The driving forces behind this wave were more diverse than before. It engaged with academic, commercial and political interests and intersected with architectural activities in the international world. The practice was no longer confined to monumental landmarks, but took up a range of building types and even large scale complexes, such as the 'pseudo-ancient' commercial streets or blocks (*fanggu jie*) at the *Shuyuanmen* of Xi'an, the *Fuzimiao* of Nanjing, the *Liulichang* of Beijing, etc. (Fig. 2.1-21)

This pursuit coincided with the introduction of 'postmodernism' in China in the early 1980s, and continued after 'postmodernist' theories faded in the mid-1990s. The 'Beaux-Arts' tradition, which had been in China for about a century and sustained the expression of 'Chineseness' in architecture for about eighty years, consistently underlay this all through and was accommodated to the emerging commercialised conditions. Like many scholars, Zhu Jianfei pointed out:

Looser and more pluralistic, it was encouraged though not controlled by the government, and had no strong ideological articulation. The revival of interest in tradition and in conservation, and the increasing commercialisation of 'tradition', contributed to and were in fact part of this development.⁷⁵

Despite this, political implications did not entirely fade away. As the state claimed to 'construct socialism with Chinese characteristics' and fought against the ideological 'pollution' from the outside, particularly from the 'west', seeking a 'Chinese

⁷⁵ Zhu, Jianfei (1995). pp. 7.

character' in architecture was still important.

To create 'Chinese characteristic architecture' was one central concern of the time. In the early 1980s, the discussions about 'innovation', 'tradition', 'modernisation', and 'national style' basically continued those of the 1950s. However, after the second half of the 1980s, the terms 'national style' and 'national form' gradually faded away. Instead, cultural character, identity and 'context' were often used, along with an increasing interest in vernacular architecture, research on which started in the 1950s and the practice of which, for example the '*Lingnan* style', was undertaken from the 1960s onwards. In 1987, the journal *Architect* together with the Chongqing Institute of Architecture and Engineering (now Chongqing University) held the First Academic Symposium of Graduate Students of Architecture in the heading 'City, Architecture, Culture'. Twenty-four essays out of seventy-six directly contributed to the issue of readdressing the character and tradition of Chinese architecture from the viewpoint of 'culture'. A number of the contributors have been active in architectural education, research and practice ever since.⁷⁶ This could be read as a sign that the pursuit of 'Chinese characteristic architecture' had passed to the generation educated in the Reform period.

At the outset of the whole discussion, the 'artistic character' of architecture and the notion of 'national style' were in question.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Thirty-two essays and all the abstracts were published in the *Architect (Beijing)*, 31, 1988.

⁷⁷ The materials that I use in discussing the 'Chinese characteristic architecture' in the 1980s and 1990s are largely from the journal *Architect (Beijing)* for two reasons. First, *Architect* was an

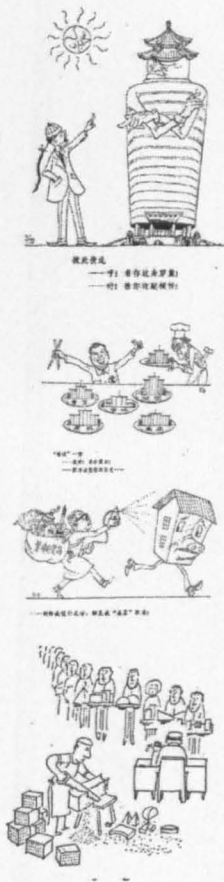


Fig. 2.1-22

(Fig 2.1-22) In 1980, when reviewing Liu Xiufeng's speech 'Constructing the Socialist New Style' in 1959,⁷⁸ Yan Fengxiang argued:

...do not dredge up the art of architecture beyond the content of utilitarian function and economic technology. [...] Do not compel architecture to do what it cannot and should not do.

Yet he agreed that,

...the socialist modernisation of our architecture must incorporate particular national characters, i.e. adopting certain national form was the only way [towards modernisation].⁷⁹

Some architects thought that the very notion of 'national form' was problematic, due to its unclear definition, imitative approach and elevation of form. They suggested replacing it by 'inheriting national tradition or absorbing the quintessence of traditional architecture'.⁸⁰ Whether or not the notion of 'national form' was agreed on, they shared the same intention: to get rid of specified political tasks in works of architecture. Nonetheless, this 'political' reaction did not interrupt the attempt to make a 'new' and 'Chinese' architecture.

At the same time, to counter the 'revivalist' approach, the 'spiritual resemblance' (*shengsi*) was brought forward to replace

academic-oriented architectural journal newly founded in 1979. While the *Architectural Journal* (Beijing) took a more official and orthodoxy role, the *Architect* was more theoretical and vivid, and attracted more young architects and scholars. Second, the discussion topics in *Architect* and the contributors to it largely overlapped with other journals, including the *Architectural Journal*. Nonetheless, I have consulted the other publications, such as *Architectural Journal*, *World Architecture* and the second-hand literatures.

⁷⁸ The background and main objectives of Liu Xiufeng's speech see Section 1.6.

⁷⁹ Yan, Fengxiang (1980). "不要在适用功能和经济技术的内容之外去发掘建筑艺术。[...] 不要勉强它去做那些它根本不可能也根本不应该去做的事情!" "我国建筑的社会主义现代化必须和民族的具体特点相结合, 即采用一定的民族形式, 才是必由之路。"

⁸⁰ Qin, Zhe Ibid.

the approach of 'formal resemblance' (*xingsi*). Literally, the 'spiritual resemblance' meant to possess an abstract 'Chinese manner' rather than to simply reproduce traditional forms. However, the concept of 'spiritual resemblance' seemed even more ambiguous. Zeng Zhaofen was one of a few who were sceptical about it:

If architecture is to get hold of the 'spiritual resemblance' and to take the antiques as 'resembling' objects, the outcome cannot be any more than 'formal resemblance' [...] It seems to be relatively concrete and easy to judge whether or not a 'form resembles'. As to the 'spiritual resemblance', different persons have different views.⁸¹

In fact, the 'spiritual resemblance' stood more as an attitude than a concept. Ai Dingzeng, a proponent, outlined in 1991:

This school does not reject taking in or introducing [things from outside China], but wish to digest and transform [them] into things Chinese at the start. [...] It tries to create architecture with a Chinese manner on the basis of modern architectural technology.⁸²

This position did not sound so different from those of the 1920s and 1950s. As showed above, from 'Chinese style', 'Chinese inherent style' to 'national form', either architectural or official statements never rejected absorbing the 'new' or 'contemporary' from outside China. Now in this wave when political interference was withdrawn, some 'modernist' works were referred to as examples of the 'spiritual resemblance'. Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie houses and Fallingwater, Kenzo Tango's National Gymnasiums for Tokyo Olympics and Kisho Kurokawa's

⁸¹ Zeng, Zhaofen (1982). pp. 29. "我们建筑若要搞'神似', 如果以老古董为'似'的对象, 其结果只能是形似而已。" "看来, '形似'与否, 比较具体而易于判断; 说到'神似', 可能只是公公婆婆, 见仁见智了。"

⁸² Ai, Dingzeng (1991). pp. 34. "这一派一般并不反对拿来或引进, 但希望在拿来引进的开始就力求消化转变为中国的东西。[...] 力求在现代建筑技术的基础上创作出中国味的建筑来。"

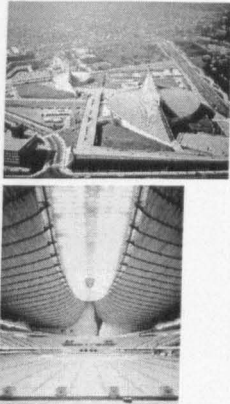


Fig. 2.1-23

theories on 'Engawa' and 'grey space', were appreciated because of their successful integration of 'modern' and 'tradition'.⁸³ (Fig. 2.1-23) Under the auspice of 'new' and 'Chinese', the critique of 'revivalism' or 'imitation' mainly depended upon formal simplification rather than conceptual oppositions. The phenomena suggested again that, aside from political and historical reasons, the 'compatibility' of the 'Beaux-Arts' system was probably another cause of its continuity and conventionality in Chinese architecture.

The rise of the 'culture' issue in architecture, supported by 'postmodernist' theories, reinforced the thesis that Chinese architecture had a distinctive nature rooted in 'tradition'. Differing from previous theories, which solely concerned themselves with architectural forms, the cultural analysis analysed 'tradition' by reference to a broader field, including Chinese philosophies, local customs and aesthetics.

Chinese architecture can represent the worldviews of Chinese people at the most. It can more be called **an essential symbol of Chinese culture**. Ancient Chinese architecture has both spiritual meanings and material functions. It reflects the pattern of the worldviews in Chinese people's minds, and is also [...] the only physical carrier of aesthetic ideals.⁸⁴

Chinese architecture is entirely different from western architecture,

⁸³ The three figures are all modernist architects. In China, they were appreciated particularly by remaining tradition in modern architecture. Interestingly, as Chinese architects praised Tange's Stadium as a smooth marriage of 'tradition' and 'modern', Tange himself denied the intention and thought that the form only came from structure. Zhang, Mingyu (1982). Among the modernist masters, Frank Lloyd Wright could be most acknowledged in 1980s China, due to his promotion of harmony with nature, his theory of 'organism', and his citation of the ancient Chinese philosopher Laozi's words. In my interview with Peng Yigang, he admitted that he preferred Wright's Prairie houses to his Guggenheim Museum in New York. This phenomenon once again lend the evidence to my argument that 'modern' in China operates as a broad category which contains the 'Beaux-Arts', 'modernism' and 'postmodernism'.

⁸⁴ Zhang, Kexiang (1996). "中国建筑最能表现中国人的宇宙感，更可称为中国文化的基本象征物。中国古建筑既有形而上的意义，又有形而下的功能，它既反映了中国人心中的宇宙图案，又是[...]美学理想的唯一真实载体。"

in terms of shape, structure, detailed decoration and employment of materials. But the most fundamental difference probably should be architectural space and **cultural connotations** of it.⁸⁵

There is some new terminology here, such as the 'symbol' of culture and cultural 'connotation', borrowed from 'postmodernism'. However, the 'new' theoretical interpretation did not challenge the underlying 'Beaux-Arts' tradition in three respects. First, 'culture' here generally meant 'traditional culture'; contemporary lifestyles and 'commercial culture' were either criticised or omitted. Second, the contemporary architectural theories and practices continued to account for traditional Chinese roots. For instance, Gong Jianxin proposed a theoretical coincidence of 'postmodernism', eclecticism and traditional Chinese philosophy – 'centrism' (*zhongyong*), in terms of 'adjusting the extremes to reach the moderate' and 'mingling indigenous tradition of architecture and imported forms'.⁸⁶ Third, when the 'cultural analysis' and expression tried to address architectural features, they basically continued the previous formal approach, from layouts, elevations, components, to decorations and ornaments. (Fig. 2.1-24) Although the forms and elements gained new associated 'cultural meanings', this wave did not manage to break with the previous concepts and practice, and because of this, more than a few Chinese architects reacted, taking the view that 'postmodernism

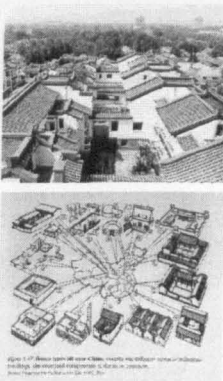


Fig. 2.1-24.

⁸⁵ Wang, Guixiang Ibid. “中国建筑与西方建筑在造型上、结构上、细部装饰上，在建材的使用上都是大相径庭的，而最根本的区别恐怕还应该说是在建筑空间、以及建筑空间的文化内涵上。”

⁸⁶ Gong, Jianxin (1988). “折衷，有调节过之与不及，使适中之意。” “我们既不应该一概抛弃民族建筑的传统，也不能因此定于一尊，一概拒绝所有外来形式。正确的态度应该是，采用折衷主义的手法，把这两者有机地融合在一起。”



Fig. 2.1-25.

resuscitates revivalism in Chinese architecture'.⁸⁷ (Fig. 2.1-25)

In the 1980s and 1990s, the idea of pursuing the 'Chinese character' in architecture did not have a strong connection with the task of identifying the social standing of the architectural profession. Having operated in Chinese society for about one hundred years, the whole system had been built up and fitted to the modern conditions of China. New policies and commercial market now gave more freedom to architectural design and more respect to individual authority. The nationwide Architects Registration was set up in 1994 and individual architect's offices were gradually approved and licensed. Nevertheless, the situation in reality was not very satisfactory. Insofar as architecture belonged to the category of engineering, there was still a need to define its specific difference. The 'cultural nature' of architecture lent both an intellectual dimension to the profession and the resistance to penetration of commerce. Chen Bochong once claimed:

It is of significance to establish cultural architecture. First, [it] will plant the concept of architecture into the deeper soil of culture, will expand it wider, and it will be closer to the nature of architectural phenomena. Second, [it] will get rid of meaningless, brutal and even ugly buildings, and will enable architecture to find the position that it **should be at**.⁸⁸

Another stimulus to the voice of the 'Chinese character' of architecture came from international activities. From the 1980s to 1990s, the international influences were mainly via three

⁸⁷ Ai, Dingzeng (1991).

⁸⁸ Chen, Bochong (1989). "建立文化建筑学的意义重大: 1. 将建筑的概念扎入更深的文化土壤, 拓展得更广, 也更接近建筑现象的本质; 2. 剔除干瘪的、野蛮的甚至是丑陋的构筑物, 使建筑找到自己应有的地位。"



Fig. 2.1-26



Fig. 2.1-27.

channels. Firstly, the international practices that employed traditional elements, images and concepts in their projects in China, such as the Fragrant Hill Hotel by I. M. Pei in 1982, the Shanghai Centre by John Portman & Associates in 1990, the Jin Mao Tower by S. O. M in 1999, etc. (Fig. 2.1-26, 27) Secondly, the imported theories, including 'postmodernism' and the 'critical regionalism' of Kenneth Frampton. Thirdly, the international competitions through which the Chinese architects won prizes by adopting indigenous philosophies, concepts and elements.

Lu Jiwei has summarised the phenomena as follows:

The uniqueness of the idea is another important factor of design competitions. [...] Recently, in the international competitions that we attended, many [winning] proposals were based upon Chinese tradition, such as the Modern Ark [*Gongzhai*], the A Atrium in Region of Rivers, the *Leshan* Museum, etc. To the international world, Chinese tradition certainly has a distinct character.⁸⁹ (Fig. 2.1-28, 29, 30)

It is fair to say that not all international practices and the organisers of the international competitions were in favour of 'postmodernism' or expression of the 'Chineseness'. Architects from outside China basically maintained a line of neo-'modernism'. To adopt traditional elements, images and concepts of Chinese architecture was motivated either by personal experiences (I. M. Pei) or by design strategies (Portman and S. O. M). In effect, they intensified the significance of producing the indigenous approach of the architecture, or as the Chinese stated, 'the more indigenous, the more international'.

To put it another way, without strong ideological and political

⁸⁹ Lu, Jiwei (1987). "构思的独特性是设计竞赛的另一个重要问题。[...] 近年来我国参加的各项国际设计竞赛中，很多是以中国的传统为内容，如功宅、水乡中庭、乐山博物馆等。中国的传统对于国际来说，当然会具有明显的特征。"



Fig. 2.1-28.

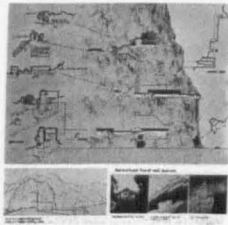


Fig. 2.1-29.



Fig. 2.1-30.

articulation, to possess the 'Chinese character' practically lent a uniqueness and meaning to an architectural creation. Nevertheless, to Chinese architecture which had not experienced the history of 'modernism', the international 'support' converged and even enhanced the convention of modern architecture in China.

Looking through the operation of the 'new' and the 'Chinese' in twentieth century Chinese architecture, it seems that it was quite evidently based upon the 'Beaux-Arts' system. In terms of its 'origins', its approaches and its central concepts, the 'Chinese characteristic architecture' was a hybrid construction within which 'Chinese' and 'non-Chinese' were indistinguishable. On the one side, the pursuit of each wave coincided with imported theories and practices, and never rejected things 'new' and 'useful' from outside China, whether these happened to be neoclassicism, 'modernism' or 'postmodernism'. On the other side, it was driven by Chinese architects' interests, political proposition and to some extents practical and commercial purposes, while absorbing traditional features of Chinese architecture. Insofar as 'modernism' had been historically and conceptually omitted, the 'Beaux-Arts' practice took up the expression across different historical periods and worked with different theories and ideologies. In other words, the fit between the 'Beaux-Arts' system and the modern conditions of architectural production enabled it to cope with the different requirements of modern China, on the level of either symbolisation or standardised construction. One may also have

noticed that there was a certain potential for turning away from the 'Beaux-Arts' throughout the course of the development of architecture in this period. To some extent and for different reasons, the pursuit of the 'Chinese character' retarded this potential and strengthened the orthodoxy of the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition. Due to the hybrid nature and the insistence of the 'Beaux-Arts' system, the 'new' and 'Chinese', and the 'modern' and 'western' are not two separate things, but the two sides of one coin.

2.2 'Composition' and Constitution of Architectural Knowledge

In the last section, we discussed the legitimization of 'modern architecture' in terms of the consistent pursuit of both the 'new' and the 'Chinese' in architecture throughout the twentieth century. The discussion revealed that the consistency of the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition discursively corresponded to the various state ideologies, the expressions of different 'characters', and the professional identification of architecture in Chinese society. The discussion also revealed 'composition' as a key 'Beaux-Arts' technique that enabled it to be freed from particular ideologies and traditions and to come to terms with the different symbolisations and styles of different countries. This section will further explore how the 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition' sustained the constitution of design principles for architectural production in China. 'Composition', as argued in Section 2.1.1, is not a simple act of 'putting elements together' into a unified whole, but also

relates to an array of different 'constructions' of architectural knowledge which regulate and sustain the act of design. This section will examine three aspects of the 'constructions' that exist in Chinese architecture: the setting up of the principles for governing architectural forms, the construction of a 'tradition' for the expression of 'Chineseness', and the regularisation of design methods and approaches for architectural practice.

The materials of this section will focus on three books, *On Space Composition of Architecture*, the *History of Chinese Architecture*, and the *Principles of Housing Design*. These three books have not so far been discussed in any of the English-language literature, and are even omitted in the Chinese literatures. However, in reality, they played a fundamental role in forming the basis of architectural knowledge in China. They were all written by teachers from architectural schools and for pedagogical purposes. The *History of Chinese Architecture* and the *Principles of Housing Design* were textbooks and were compiled by two groups from five universities. First published in the early 1980s, they were used in different architectural schools right up until the beginning of this century. *On Space Composition of Architecture* was written by an individual author, Peng Yigang, who was a professor at Tianjin University. Although it was not a textbook, it has been an indispensable reference for architectural teachers and students. Since it was first published in 1983 up to 2006, the book went through twenty-seven prints and 158,640 copies were issued. Certainly, the contents of the books may not be followed in their entirety

and could be adjusted for the purposes of different teaching programmes. Nevertheless, from my personal experience – training and practising in China – and my discussions with graduates, students and teachers from different universities, I believe that their structure of and the methodical approaches to design problems and solutions have remained the same. Moreover, the timing of their publication was crucial. Because proper architectural publication was constrained for some twenty years, the greater number of textbooks issued in the early years of the Reform time – the time when the current architectural education restarted – acted as a device to carry on the preceding practical achievements as well as teaching and research into current practice. That is to say, after the halt of architectural education in the Cultural Revolution, these publications ensure the continuity of the training of the 1950s into the 1980s.

2.2.1 *On Space Composition of Architecture*

Peng Yigang's *On Space Composition of Architecture* is perhaps the most widely circulated architectural book written by a Chinese architect, which directly 'dealt with architectural form'.⁹⁰ However, we should not confuse Peng's use of the term 'space' with modernist discourse, if we agree that 'space' is a concept

⁹⁰ Peng Yigang, born in 1932, graduated from the Department of Architecture of Tianjin University in 1953, and has been taught there since ever. He currently holds a professorship in Tianjin University and is a fellow of the Chinese Academy of Science. In 1979, he published his first book, the *Basic Knowledge of Architectural Drawing*. In 1986, he published his third book, the *Analysis of Chinese Ancient Garden*, which used of the principles of the *On Space Composition of Architecture* as an analytical tool to decode the spatial arrangement of Chinese gardens. Peng's teacher, the Head of Architectural Department at that time, Xu Zhong (1912-1985), graduated from the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois in America in 1937, the year when Walter Gropius and Mies van de Rohe arrived at America.

particularly related to 'modernism' in European and American architecture. 'Space' here is a practical term rather than one that indicates a conceptual category. For Peng, 'space' describes the dimension of utility of architecture in its quest to accommodate different uses and is a physical element equal to 'decoration' in the composition of 'architectural form'.

'Architectural form' often mentioned by people, in a strict sense, is a concept of synthesis which is formed from the assemblage of various elements: space, volume, outline, void and solid, intrusion and extrusion, colour, texture, decoration and so on. In these elements, some keep the close and direct relation to function; some do not closely and directly relate to function; and some almost have no relation to function at all. Based upon this fact, if we indiscriminately account for everything in terms of function, it is apparently wrong. From this point of view, 'form following function', the motto of modern architecture, although having its reasonable and correct aspects, obviously exaggerates the role of function by generally regarding every form from function. At this point, it indeed has certain one-sided views.

Thus, what is the element of form directly relating to function? It is space. [...] Architecture, for people's use, is nothing else but its space. Starting from this point, someone goes further and compares architecture to a container – a container accommodating people. That content determines form in architecture mainly means that architectural function requires corresponding form of space.⁹¹

Undoubtedly, to Peng and probably most Chinese architects, 'space' and 'form' merely meant the physical existence and shapes of building. Using the terms 'space' and 'form' did not

⁹¹ Peng, Yigang (1983). pp. 12. “人们经常提到的‘建筑形式’，严格地讲，它是由空间、体形、轮廓、虚实、凹凸、色彩、质地、装饰……等种种要素的集合而形成的复合的概念。这些要素，有的和功能保持着紧密而直接的联系；有的和功能的联系并不直接、紧密；有的几乎与功能没有什么联系，基于这一事实，如果我们不加区别地把这一切都说成是由功能而来的，这显然是错误的。由此看来，“形式由功能而来”这句近现代建筑的格言，尽管有它合理、正确的一面，但笼统地认为一切形式均来自功能，则显然夸大了功能的作用，就这一点来讲它确实带有一定的片面性。

那么，与功能有直接联系的形式要素是什么呢？是空间。关于这一点人们对它的认识似乎越来越明确、越深刻。[...] 从这一点出发，有的人更进一步把建筑比作容器——一种容纳人的容器。所谓内容决定形式，表现在建筑中主要就是指：建筑功能，要求与之相适应的空间形式。”

connote a categorical differentiation of 'modernism' and 'Beaux-Arts' architecture. Instead, on the basis of 'composition', the book incorporates some 'modernist' ideas, means and practices into the 'Beaux-Arts' framework. We will see the situation reiterated in this section.

'Composition' had been a long concern of Chinese architects in regard to governing and justifying 'architectural form'. The concern was directly indebted to the 'Beaux-Arts' influence. In the last section, we showed its influence upon Liang Sicheng's thinking. Here we will see that this was not an individual case but passed from one generation to another. In 1984, when Qi Kang reviewed Peng Yigang's book, he recalled that his teacher, Yang Tingbao – another influential figure in Chinese architecture and a student of the University of Pennsylvania in the 1920s, learnt 'composition' from his teacher Howard Robertson, the author of the *Principles of Architectural Composition* and a graduate of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.⁹² Qi, a professor at the Southeast University, was a graduate of the 1950s and was a leading figure in architectural practice and education of that generation. He himself had been interested in 'composition' since the 1960s.

In the early 1960s, I had a chance to systematically read foreign books on architectural composition, such as [those on] compositional principles written by Pickering, Robertson, Curtis,

⁹² Qi Kang, born in 1931, graduated from the Architectural Department of Nanjing Institute of Technology (former National Central University and now Southeast University) in 1952, and has been taught there since ever. He currently holds a professorship in Southwest University and is a fellow of the Chinese Academy of Science. He was awarded the title 'Master of Architectural Design' in 1990 and won the Liang Sicheng Architectural Prize in 2000.

Hamlin and Harbeson. Thereafter, I extensively read the relevant books, including the *Principles of Architectural Composition* edited by Tsinghua University, which should be a valuable book for teaching at the time.⁹³

This quotation provides powerful evidence for the argument of the thesis, which rests on the idea of a continuous 'modern architecture' in China, which is nonetheless divorced from 'modernism'. In the thesis, we have tried to signpost this by a perhaps over-extensive use of the term 'Beaux-Arts'. Nonetheless, here we have exactly the case that manifests this line by the statement of an influential figure in architectural practice and education in China. Although Peng Yigang did not make such references in his book, he admitted that its framework was based upon Hamlin's and Curtis's books, and attempted to extend the principles elucidated by them into more contemporary, in his own word, 'modern architecture'.⁹⁴ As discussed in Section 2.1.1, N. C. Curtis's *Architectural Composition* published in 1923 predated any commitment to 'modernism'. Hamlin's *Forms and Functions in Twentieth Century Architecture* published in 1952 was a climax of writing 'a new Guadet' under the influence of the 'Beaux-Arts' system even at the time of penetration of 'modernism'.⁹⁵ In the context of Chinese architecture, Peng's book written in the early 1980s plays a role that carries on this sort of 'second hand' influence into twenty-first century.

⁹³ Qi, Kang (1984). "六十年代初, 我有机会比较系统地看了些国内外有关建筑构图书, 诸如, 匹克林、罗伯逊、克尔蒂斯、哈木林, 还有哈伯逊等人所著的构图原理。往后又较广泛的阅读了相关的书籍, 其中包括清华大学建筑系编著的《建筑构图原理》, 这本书在当时应当说是一本有价值的教学用书。"

⁹⁴ Interview with Peng Yigang by Hua Li, February 2007.

⁹⁵ Banham, Reyner (1960). pp.17.

In fact, apart from Peng's book, several publications were dedicated to 'composition' in the early 1980s. The parts on the principles of architectural composition in the second volume of the *Forms and Functions of Twentieth-Century Architecture*, and Frank Ching's *Architecture: Form, Space and Order* were respectively translated and published in 1979, 1982 and 1983.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the *Design Principles of Public Buildings* issued by the Nanjing Institute of Technology (now the Southeast University) was edited on the same basis.

The interest in 'composition' in the 1980s was both historical and practical. The discussion of architectural form and aesthetics was taboo during the Cultural Revolution. A vacuum was created in architectural pedagogy and practice, in regard to transferring architectural ideas into a proper presence of building. Peng Yigang has recalled that:

From my point of view, the design quality of a student was more dependent upon his capacity of composition at the time. When amending students' projects, [I] always met the problem of composition, but could not talk about it systematically. Of course, architectural design is not just composition, but also relates to functions, etc. But it needs to embody them to form a concrete project by composition. Otherwise, they are only ideas. Our [teaching] in design studios then was to link various functional relations of a building together by diagram. For this, students felt very easy to understand. But they need to form a complete project, plans, elevations, sections, etc., through composition. Once referring to the problems of composition, no one could tell clearly.

⁹⁶ The parts of composition principles in the *Forms and Functions in Twentieth Century Architecture* were translated individually by Xi Shuxiang and Zou Denong and were respectively published in 1979 and 1982. Frank Ching's first edition *Architecture: Form, Space and Order* was translated by Zou Denong and was published by China Architecture and Building Press (Beijing) in 1983 and 1987. The second edition was translated by Liu Yuehong and was published by Tianjin University Press in 2005. In my interview with Zou Denong (February 2007), he also confirmed that the interest in 'composition' started at least in the 1950s and was common in the 1980s.

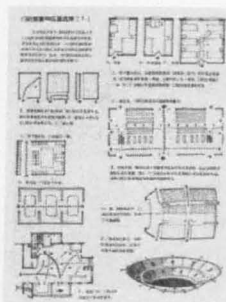


Fig. 2.2-1.

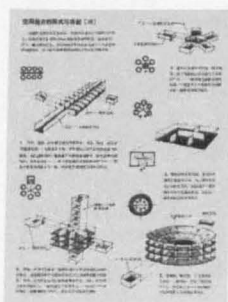


Fig. 2.2-2.

Some teachers said that you [students] would recognise it on your own experiences. It could only be understood by sense and could not be explained in words. I did not think that it should be like this.⁹⁷

As the 'Beaux-Arts' treatises discussed in the last section, the central act that Peng tried to regulate was the relationship between the part and the whole. In accordance, the book had two objectives, to elaborate the 'rules' to control and guide the relationship and to provide the generalised solutions for it, i.e. the 'resources' for *'parti'*. The book started from a basic unit of space – a room, and its physical shape, size, volume, openings and performances were determined by its functions. (Fig. 2.2-1) The book went through the ways in which several spaces assembled a part of a building, several parts being gathered together to form a single building, and several single buildings joining together to compose a building complex, corresponding to use, structural technology, expression of character, and the environment and topography of the building site. (Fig. 2.2-2) The composition, for Peng, obeyed a universal principle – 'varieties in unity' (*duoyang tongyi*), i.e. the 'aesthetic law of form' (*xingshimei de guilü*).

To architecture both ancient and modern, Chinese and foreign, although dealing forms very differently, all the excellent works inevitably follow a universal law – varieties in unity. [...] To make

⁹⁷ Interview with Peng Yigang by Hua Li, February 2007. "就在我看来, 那个时候[写作的时候]学生的设计水平更多地取决于学生的构图能力, 即 *composition*。给学生改图, 总要涉及到构图问题, 但总是讲不系统。当然, 建筑不仅是构图, 还涉及到功能等等, 但需要通过构图将它们体现出来形成一个比较具体的方案。不然的话, 只是一些概念。我们当时的设计教学, 是将各种建筑的功能, 通过 *diagram* 将各种关系联系起来。对于这个, 学生是很容易理解的。但要通过组合形成一个完整的方案, 平面、立面、剖面等等。一旦涉及到这些构图的问题, 就讲不清楚了。有的老师说这个东西你们自己去体会。只可意会, 不可言传。我认为应该不是这样的。" Interestingly, Julien Guadet held the same point that 'composition cannot be taught', but at the same time, he admitted that 'it is a matter of "inspiration" and therefore "cannot be fruitful unless it is served by knowledge".' Levine, Neil (1982). pp. 121.

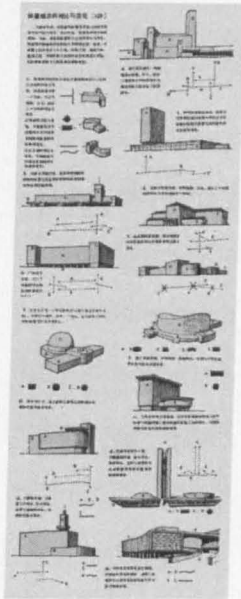


Fig. 2.2-3.

it clearly, varieties in unity, also called organic unity, can also be explained as seeking variations within unification and seeking unity within varieties, or as containing various differences within a unified whole. Any plastic art is composed of various parts, between which there are both differences and internal relationships [coherences]. Only according to certain laws to organically compose them as a whole, [we] will see diversity and variety in terms of their differences; and harmony and order in terms of their relationships.⁹⁸

Peng elucidated six governing rules – employment of simple geometries, the relationship between primary and subordination of the parts, balance and stability, contrast and subtlety, rhythm, proportion and scale, and exemplified their applications to different scales of 'composition'. The hierarchical control from the part to the whole was not just theoretical, but also practical. In technical terms, the theoretical elaboration of the book was accompanied by a great number of diagrams and illustrated cases together with notes. (Fig. 2.2-3) We can imagine that, bearing the principles and the solutions in mind, students would be able to choose proper approaches from the offerings, to adapt them to particular requirements and conditions, and to appropriate them in accordance with the 'universal law'.

Likewise, the rules of 'composition', to Peng, were the basis and practical 'tools' serving for the expression of 'characters', rather than directly doing it by themselves. He consciously differentiates it as follows:

⁹⁸ Peng, Yigang (1983). pp. 33. “古今中外的建筑，尽管在形式处理方面有极大的差别，但凡属优秀作品，必然遵循一个共同的准则——多样统一。因而，只有多样统一堪称之为形式美的规律。[...] 多样统一，也称有机统一，为了明确起见，又可以说成是在统一中求变化，在变化中求统一，或者是寓杂多于整一之中。任何造型艺术，都具有若干不同的组成部分，这些部分之间，既有区别，又有内在的联系，只有把这些部分按照一定的规律，有机地组合成为一个整体，就各部分的差别，可以看出多样性和变化；就各部分之间的联系，可以看出和谐与秩序。”

Aesthetics of form and artistic quality are two different categories. In architecture, every artistic work must conform to the aesthetic law of form. On the contrary, every building that conforms to the aesthetic law of form does not necessarily have artistic quality.⁹⁹

As far as he was concerned, the former ones only determined the 'outward shapes of a building', and the latter required the shapes to convey meanings. Architectural styles could vary according to time, nation and region and individual architect, but they were all built up on the basis of 'composition'. This view shows again that it was the universality and practicality of the 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition' that allowed it to survive different cultures, different construction conventions and different ideologies. In terms of the structure, the provisions and the objectives of the book, we can safely conclude that it was an exercise in 'Beaux-Arts' education, i.e., to teach the students 'the vocabulary, the method, and the taste needed to study and refine the composition and execute it with care.'¹⁰⁰

2.2.2 The History of Chinese Architecture

The representation of the 'Chinese character' in architecture relies upon systematic research into and interpretation of the history of Chinese architecture, which itself was constructed on the basis of the 'Beaux-Arts' system. Research into the history of Chinese architecture is well-established and dates back to 1930, the time when the first architectural research organisation, the Society (later Institute) for Research in Chinese architecture was set up. Its leading academic figures, Liang Sicheng and Liu

⁹⁹ Ibid. pp. 4. “形式美和艺术性是两个不同的范畴。在建筑中，凡是具有艺术性的作品都必须符合于形式美的规律，反之，凡是符合于形式美规律的建筑却不一定具有艺术性。”

¹⁰⁰ Levine, Neil (1982). pp. 121.

Dunzhen, who were trained under the influence of the 'Beaux-Arts' in America and Japan respectively, directed the two departments, Technical Studies and Documentary Studies. Their collaboration founded the research methods and structure used in this field.¹⁰¹ For the 'Beaux-Arts' training also helped to frame the way in which historical buildings were 'reconstructed' and restored, Wilam Fairbank, wife of John King Fairbank and a close friend of Liang Sicheng, once commented:

The curriculum at Penn, based on the 'Beaux-Arts' tradition, was designed to produce practicing architects but was equally well suited to prepare architectural historians. Students were required to study the classical orders of Greece and Rome and the monuments of medieval and Renaissance Europe. Their skills were tested by such challenging assignments as drafting restorations of ancient ruins or completing the designs of unfinished cathedrals.¹⁰²

From the 1930s to 1980s and 1990s, most historians in the discipline were trained by Liang and Liu, and the research, which was enriched by new findings, new documents and individual studies, retained the basic framework that they established.¹⁰³ The textbook, the *History of Chinese*

¹⁰¹ Liu Dunzhen was trained in the Tokyo Institute of Technology from 1916 to 1921, where the influence of neoclassicism from America converged with the technological orientation. From his return to China in 1922 to his death in 1968, Liu had been a leading figure of the historical study of Chinese architecture and architectural education. For Liu's profile in the English literatures, see: Rowe, Peter G and Kuan, Seng (2003). pp. 220. For the situation of Chinese architectural students in Japan from the late nineteenth century to 1945, see: Xu, Subin (1997).

¹⁰² Liang, Ssu-Ch'Eng (1984). pp. xiv.

¹⁰³ From the 1950s to 1990s, a number of publications dedicated to the history of ancient Chinese architecture in China. Most of the authors, such as Mo Zhongjiang, Liu Zhiping, Fu Xinian, etc., were Liang Sicheng's and Liu Dunzhen's students, either from the Institute for Research in Chinese Architecture, or from Tsinghua University and Southeast University where they led the research. In addition, many of their students held the position of teaching history in different architectural schools.

During the fifty years development from 1930 to 1980, the historical study in Chinese architecture experienced two interruptions caused by the Japanese invasion from 1937 to 1945 and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. In the 1950s and 1960s, the political interference severed the research from current development in European and American architecture and constrained its theoretical development. Moreover, as a 'new' discipline starting from scratch, it faced the major tasks of surveying existing buildings, translating ancient literature, building up documents and archive, and theorising on them. To some extent, the manifold reasons enhanced the consistency of the research method and framework in the field.

Architecture, was not exceptional. Four of its five editors, Pan Guxi, Guo Husheng, Liu Xujie and Hou Youbin, were Liu and Liang's students.¹⁰⁴ The book conforms to their ways of processing historical materials and characterising the 'tradition' of Chinese architecture.

The work of the Institute for Research in Chinese Architecture and the contributions of Liang Sicheng and Liu Dunzhen have been extensively studied. However, what does not seem to receive adequate attention from current scholars is the influence of 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition' upon the form of analysing traditional Chinese architecture. From my point of view, the influence comes in two related aspects: the principles for identifying the characters and the categories for structuring the building types and elements.

As a historical narrative, the textbook did not talk in abstract about analytical and structural principles. Instead, it embedded them in an account of the achievements of ancient Chinese architecture, viz.

...the harmonious unification, the design methods and the construction technologies in urban planning, building complexes, gardens, residential houses, spatial arrangements, architectural arts, and materials and structures'.¹⁰⁵

The part of the textbook concerned with antiquity consists of eight chapters. Four of them are on individual building types –

¹⁰⁴ The five editors of the *History of Chinese Architecture* came from three universities, Nanjing Institute of Technology, South China University of Technology and Harbin Institute of Architecture and Engineering.

¹⁰⁵ Pan, Guxi (1986). pp.1.

palace, altar and mausoleum, religious building, house and garden. Two chapters depict wooden architecture, and construction details in the Qing Dynasty. In general, stylistic development is the main focus. For instance, when the textbook summarises the five achievements of the Forbidden City in Beijing, four of them directly refer to its formal characteristics:

[...] the emphasis of the central axis and symmetrical layout; the employment of courtyards and variations of [the scales] of the spaces; the contrast of the scales of the buildings; the splendid colour and decorations; and the technological facilities.¹⁰⁶

This characterisation is intertwined at the same time with the 'reconfiguration' of building units and components. It is the reverse of the process of 'composition', and dissects the 'whole' into 'parts'.

Timber-frame construction in ancient China had many variations. Single buildings had *dian*, *tang*, *ting*, *xuan*, *guan*, *lou*, *xie*, *ge*, *ta*, *ting[zi]*, *que*, *men* and *lang*. The [forms of] the plan were square, rectangular, circle, triangle, pentagon, octagon, [...], etc. These units composed various building complexes from house to temple and palace.¹⁰⁷ (Fig. 2.2-4)

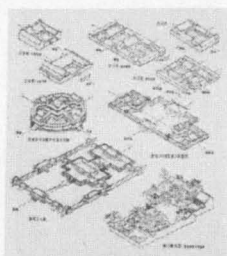


Fig. 2.2-4.

From its appearance, a single building can basically be divided into three parts: platform, main body and roof. Among them, the most notable change occurs to roofs, whose forms comprise *wudian*, *xieshan*, *xuanshan* [...].¹⁰⁸

According to the textbook, each of the parts has different forms, different compositional elements in different shapes, materials,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. pp. 65-67.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. pp. 157. "中国古代木构建筑变化很多, 单体建筑有殿、堂、厅、轩、馆、楼、榭、阁、塔、亭、阙、门、廊等; 平面有方、长方、圆、三角、五角、六角、八角[...]等。由这些单体又组成了从住宅到庙宇、宫殿等各种建筑群。" Here are the translations of the single buildings: *dian*: monumental hall; *tang*: main hall; *ting*: lobby; *xuan*: lofty building; *guan*: guest room; *lou*: building of two or more stories; *xie*: pavilion or house on a terrace; *ge*: multi-storied pavilion; *ta*: pagoda; *tingzi*: pavilion; *que*: paired gate piers; *men*: gate or porch; and *lang*: roofed open corridor.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. pp. 159. "单体建筑在外观上大致可分为台基、屋身和屋顶三部分。其中变化最显著的是屋顶, 形式有庑殿、歇山、悬山[...]。" *wudian*: hip roof; *xieshan*: gable and hip roof; *xuanshan*: overhanging gable roof.



Fig. 2.2-5.

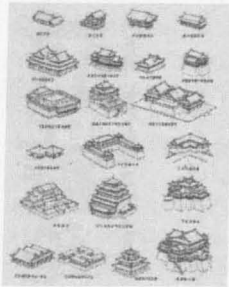


Fig. 2.2-6.

scales and colours, and different ways of being joined together. (Fig. 2.2-5, 6) For the unification of the 'parts' into a harmonious whole, the textbook describes a governing system – 'modules'.

At a very early time, architectural design and construction [in China] had implemented the 'module' system similar to modern architecture (Song Dynasty used 'cai' and Qing Dynasty used 'doukou' as standards) and the normalisation of components. To the forms, scales and construction details from the whole to the part, [they] had the rather detailed prescriptions.¹⁰⁹

Moving from whole to part, the textbook builds up a systematic account of ancient Chinese architecture by classifying buildings into types, units and components, and formulating ways of joining them together according to different uses and technological availabilities.

Nevertheless, the systematic account is not a simple documentation of the historical facts or a literal translation of ancient archive into modern architectural terminology. The structuring of historical materials rather than the contents themselves is a 'modern' construction of the 'tradition'. Two comparative cases may make this point more intelligible: the Building Standards (*yingzao fashi*) of the Song Dynasty and the Structural Regulations of the Qing Dynasty (*Qingshi Gongcheng Zeli*), and Henry K. Murphy's summary of the characteristics of ancient Chinese architecture.

The Building Standards of the Song Dynasty and Structural

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. pp. 156. “在建筑的设计和施工中很早就实行了类似于近代建筑模数制（宋代用“材”、清代用“斗口”作标准）和构件的定型化。对于建筑整体到局部的形式、尺度和做法，都有相当详细的规定。”

Regulations of the Qing Dynasty (*Qingshi Gongcheng Zeli*) both served important references to historical research, and lent it all their technical words and construction criteria.¹¹⁰ However, they seem to be organised differently and for different purposes. Ultimately, they are construction manuals corresponding to the control of building costs. In the case of the Building Standards, two chapters out of the total thirty-six explain technical terms; fifteen chapters are about construction methods, including surveys, foundations, various types of masonry and carpentry, and paintings, accompanied by six chapters of illustrating drawings; and thirteen of the total are about the calculation of labour and materials. There is no statement of the principles of conducting the generation of building forms and compounds. The instructions can be adapted to different situations, such as craft customs, building size, costs and so on, but they do not seem to add up to universal 'design methods' as the modern researchers had asserted. Zhao Chen, an architectural historian from Nanjing University, has argued that the historical research, under the influence of Liang Sicheng, was an application of 'composition theory' to the analysis of the facades of ancient Chinese architecture, i.e. 'trying to detect certain proportional relationships to define the styles of ancient Chinese architecture'; to take the column as 'a fundamental element to control the facade of a whole building'; and to take 'cai' and 'doukou' as 'Ratio' to 'determine the proportion and scale of the architectural facade'.¹¹¹



Fig. 2.2-7.

(Fig. 2.2-7)

¹¹⁰ Liang, Ssu-Ch'Eng (1984). pp. 14.

¹¹¹ Zhao, Chen (2001).

The organisation of building types in the textbook either does not exist in the Song Dynasty's Building Standards, or is quite different from the Qing Dynasty's Structural Regulations. Indeed, the Structural Regulations lists twenty-seven building kinds, such as halls, city gates, pavilions, etc., but they basically depend upon structural and construction differences rather than typological differentiations in the modern sense. When Xu Yinong, a contemporary scholar, studied the development of urban form in Suzhou, he discovered:

Lack of discernible difference between the forms and styles of Chinese urban and rural buildings was fundamentally determined by a characteristic absence of formal bond between building types and social institutions.¹¹²

Zhao and Xu do not directly point to the influence of the 'Beaux-Arts', but their discoveries suggest that the characterisation of Chinese architecture in the textbook was indeed a 'modern' construction of 'tradition'.

The second comparative case is Henry K. Murphy's summary of the characteristics of ancient Chinese architecture. In his article, *An Architectural Renaissance in China*, he identifies five essential features:

[...] the curving and upturned roof; the orderliness of arrangements, seen in the almost universal grouping of the principal buildings about great rectangular courts and in the marked adherence to axial planning; the frankness of construction; the lavish use of gorgeous colour; and the perfect proportioning, one to another, of its architectural elements.¹¹³

Murphy did not read the ancient Chinese manuals, and his

¹¹² Xu, Yinong (2000). pp. 7.

¹¹³ Murphy, Henry Killam (1928). pp. 470-472.

points are not exactly those made in the textbook. However, the textbook, as shown above, shares more affinities with Murphy than with the ancient manuals in terms of its formal approach to analysing traditional construction and its way of characterising it by referring to the featured elements, the axial planning and the proportion or scale to govern the groupings. Insofar as the training of Murphy and the Chinese architects were all based upon the 'Beaux-Arts' education, we can conclude that the textbook, the *History of Chinese Architecture*, was a 'modern' interpretation of traditional construction in China drawn up on the basis of 'Beaux-Arts' knowledge and training.¹¹⁴

It should not be forgotten that the origin of historical research into ancient Chinese architecture was to provide references for practice. When the Institute for Research in Chinese Architecture was established, one of its objectives was to 'study the inherent architectural technology in China, [in order to] assist the creation of new architecture in the future'.¹¹⁵ Aside from its academic research, the Institute was also involved in real projects, and offered consultations for practising architects and those engaged in architectural education.¹¹⁶ From 1935 to 1937, in order to help the design of the 'national style', the Institute subsequently published the ten-volume *Illustrated References*

¹¹⁴ Li, Shiqiao (2003). Li's article provides an insightful analysis of how architectural 'drawing' was used as a 'modern' institutionalised technique to reconstruct the 'tradition', in the case of Liang Sicheng reinterpreting the classical manual *Ying-zao fashi*. He wrote, 'Liang [Sicheng] was, of course, no longer speaking from a traditional Chinese scholar's paradigm of a "good copy", but from architectural knowledge founded on modern principles, and on graphic conventions that came with his Beaux-Arts education under the guidance of Paul Cret. Liang was later to note that the drawings in the *Ying-zao fashi* were inconsistent in format, lacking in the concept of scale, inadequately annotated, and insufficient in differentiating line types.' Li, Shiqiao (2003). pp. 482.

¹¹⁵ Chen, Yanbing and Wang, Junming (2002). pp. 107.

¹¹⁶ Fu, Chaoqing (1993). pp. 37-42.

for Architectural Design, directed by Liang Sicheng and compiled by Liu Zhiping.¹¹⁷ The References functioned as a library of 'vocabularies'. Each volume addresses one component of ancient buildings, such as the platform, stone baluster, bracket, tile, etc., and supplies a number of photos with drawings and notes. As to their effect, Fu Chaoqing commented:

The influence [of the References] upon the new Chinese classical-style architecture from the 1930s was incalculable. It can be proved by the apparent increase in the detailed decoration in the kind of building constructed at that time.¹¹⁸

In 1953, another reference series, which was organised in a similar format and had more drawings and photos, was published to coincide with the promotion of 'socialist content, national form'.

The textbook may not have had an immediate effect upon practice. But by establishing itself on the same structural ground, it acted as an index for practice. It formulated a methodical approach to characterise the 'traditions'; that is to say, it abstracted characteristic elements from their own construction context, and relocated them in categories of modern construction, and in consequence, was able to appropriate them as 'symbols' in a certain order.

Although Chinese architectural history before the nineteenth century is not strictly part of the scope of this thesis, our

¹¹⁷ Liang, Sicheng (1935). pp. 1-8.

¹¹⁸ Fu, Chaoqing (1993). pp. 39. "[《建筑设计参考图集》]对三十年代以后,中国古典式样新建筑之影响是无可计量的,这可由当时所建之此类建筑中有显著增多之细部装饰一事中得到佐证。"

argument is that the dimension of Chinese representations of the past in the twentieth century provides strong evidence for the overall argument of the chapter – that is, the representations of architectural past undertaken in the twentieth century are indebted to the 'Beaux-Arts' framework of analysis and architectural representation. The effect of producing a universal framework of architectural analysis automatically derived from classical architecture forced non-European traditions of architecture into its framework and categories. This is not solely a Chinese phenomenon, but is suggestive evidence that even in a post-imperial world, history is seen as the continuation of a certain 'euro-centrism'. The argument of the thesis is that 'modern architecture' in China, which is also broadly associated with 'Beaux-Arts' architecture, was imported not as an alternative to Chinese architecture, but as architecture itself, in the sense that traditional Chinese design and construction did not really make its own transition into the 'modern'. In the case of these historical materials in this section, what we see is that even the architectural past in China was altered to a 'modern' European framework of analysis and representation.

2.2.3 The Principles of Housing Design

The last textbook to be examined in this section is about regulating the principles of housing design. There is a large Chinese and English literature on housing issues in China from various points of view – policy, social distribution, planning to

specific designs, and technological matters.¹¹⁹ However, in this section our examination of the textbook, the *Principles of Housing Design*, concerns two aspects: the regulated design approaches through which the final product could come into being, and the teaching form of the design studio through which professional training was conducted. The first edition of the textbook, which is discussed here, was published in 1980, and was used until the second edition – one of the 'Key Textbooks' organised by the Ministry of Construction during the Ninth Five Years (1996-2000) – came out in 1999. Its seven editors and five consultants were experts drawn from seven architectural schools, one research academy and one design institute.¹²⁰ Its contents cover the main issues in the previous thirty years of research and practice. The editing team, which included educators, researchers and practitioners, somehow ensured that the principles proposed in the textbook could work in practice, although the link between theory and practice is not entirely seamless. Moreover, for teaching purposes, the book is compiled in accordance with the programmes of the design studios, which have been organised around building types, such as school, hotel, theatre and cinema, etc., following the model of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.¹²¹ In this sense, the outline of the

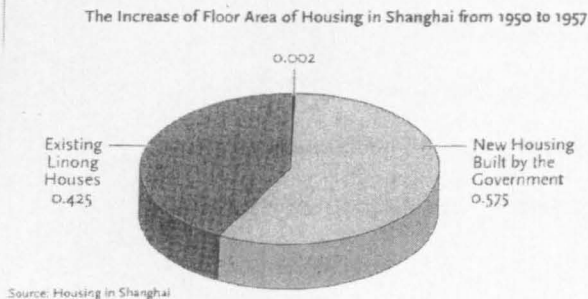
¹¹⁹ The *Modern Urban Housing in China 1842-2000*, edited by Lü Junhua, Peter Rowe and Zhang Ji in 2001, is so far the most comprehensive document of housing development in China.

¹²⁰ The two chief editors, Zhu Changlian and Li Zaishen, taught at the Chongqing Institute of Architecture and Engineering (now Chongqing University) at the time. As to the other editors, Jin Zhensheng came from South China University of Technology, Tong Heling from Tianjin University, Zhang Jiaji from Harbin Institute of Architecture and Engineering, Zhang Shouyi from Tsinghua University and Zhao Xilun from the China Academy of Building Research. One of the consultants, Gu Baohe, was a practising architect at the Shaanxi Institute of Architectural Design.

¹²¹ After I wrote this part, Gu Daqing stated the same point in his newly published article, 'Studio Teaching as Research and Its Significance to the Development of Architectural Education in China', *Time & Architecture* (Shanghai), 03/2007. Gu was a graduate of the Southeast University in 1982, and is

textbook rather than its specific contents represents a general form of training the 'students [in architectural schools] to analyse and to resolve problems'.¹²²

Table 2.2-1 The increase of floor area of housing in Shanghai from 1950 to 1957



The establishment of state ownership and the welfare system and the large amount of construction gave rise to the 'new' practice of Chinese architects. Source: (Zhang, Ji and Wang, Tao 2001: 103-186)

Housing has been a key issue in Chinese architecture since the 1950s. The establishment of state ownership and the welfare system and the high level of construction gave rise to the 'new' practice of Chinese architects.¹²³ (Table 2.2-1) From 1953 to 1956, more than 50,000,000 square metres of housing was built. Since 1952 the standard design has been implemented, and has been systematically adhered to on the national and regional scales, as mentioned in Section 2.1.3. 'By 1953, the total area of housing under construction, employing the standard design, reached 679,000 square metres, accounting for 34 percent of all

currently teaching at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

¹²² Zhu, Changlian and Li, Zaishen (1980). Preface.

¹²³ Some forms of mass living, such as Linong house, Guangdong-style house, etc., which were different from the traditional one family courtyard house, had existed in Chinese cities from the late nineteenth century to 1950s. But their constructions were more spontaneous. To say that housing design was a 'new' practice in Chinese architecture means a systematic organisation of production from design method, technology application, construction means, to financial considerations and the distribution system.

construction'.¹²⁴ In 1955, the Planning Bureau of the Ministry of City Construction held the National Appraisal Conference of Standard Design. In 1956, 26 out of 128 projects, submitted by 25 architectural institutes from 14 provinces, were selected and approved as the blueprints of the standard design. In 1959, when construction of the Ten Grand Buildings in Beijing brought a climax of discussion on 'new style' of Chinese architecture, the *Architectural Journal* published as many articles on housing designs as those on the 'new style'.¹²⁵

To many people, housing design in China seems to be influenced by 'modernism'. Perhaps this is due to its simple appearance, its utilitarian and economic priorities and the spread of standardised design. However, we need a few words to clarify this. Housing is indeed a central issue of 'modernist' discourses, whereas it did not appear in the programmes of the nineteenth century Ecole des 'Beaux-Arts'. But in the twentieth century, some 'Beaux-Arts'-based treatises included designs for mass housing. For instance, the *Forms and Functions of Twentieth-century Architecture* allotted three chapters to 'The Apartment House', the 'Problems of Mass Shelter' and the 'Layout of Residential Communities'. This shows that, at a technical level, the 'Beaux-Arts' system had the capacity to cope with the high level of construction of residential buildings.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Zhang, Ji and Wang, Tao (2001). pp. 125.

¹²⁵ In 1959, the *Architectural Journal* published 148 articles in total. 16 out of them were about housing design and 15 about architectural styles and creation.

¹²⁶ The theoretical and conceptual differences between the *Forms and Functions of Twentieth-century Architecture* and 'modernism' could be demonstrated by different categorisations. The former put hotel, individual house and apartment house together in the category of Buildings for Residence. But this never occurred to 'modernist' architects.

The situation seems very evident in China. The principles, methods and models of housing design were first introduced from the Soviet Union with the 'new' ideas of 'standardisation, industrialisation and mechanisation'. But the contributions of Constructivist architects such as Moisei Ginzberg, Ivan Nikolaev, etc. were concealed.¹²⁷ The principles, which were later adjusted and developed according to the conditions of China, were taken as cardinal means for execution.¹²⁸ In the case of the textbook, Constructivist and modernist theories and practices were omitted. However, to Chinese architects who were accustomed to 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition', in terms of gathering the elements together to form a whole, the means of standard design did not seem difficult to accept and manipulate. A Chinese once described the Soviet standard design as follows:

A unit was to be designed with standard components conforming to a construction module. Various combinations of such standard units were to form different buildings, and when the different buildings were put together, they formed residential areas. The fundamental 'cell', so to speak, in the design of housing was the unit. A residential unit consisted of several households all using the same staircase, and its advantage was that each apartment was independent and therefore quiet.¹²⁹ (Fig. 2.2-8)

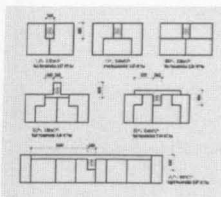


Fig. 2.2-8.

This situation does not contradict the view that there are differences between 'Beaux-Arts' architecture and 'modernism',

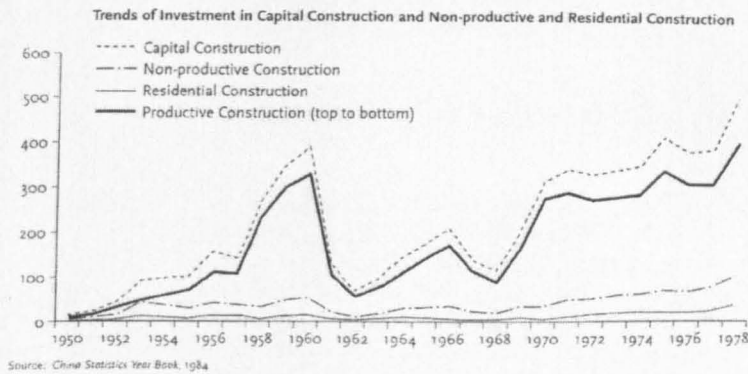
¹²⁷ The involvement of the Constructivist architects, see: Ikonnikov, Andrei (1988). pp. 117-137.

¹²⁸ The unsuitability of the Soviet housing design to the Chinese situation was extensively discussed at the time and in contemporary historical writings. The unsuitability seemed mainly on two factors. One was the housing standard of the Soviet Union – nine square metres per person –, which was much higher than the Chinese standard of four square metres per person. The other was that the Soviet's perimeter layout of the housing block did not satisfy the requirements for sunlight and ventilation in China. In English literatures, see: Zhang, Ji and Wang, Tao (2001).

¹²⁹ Ibid. pp. 125.

but is rather another manifestation of the conformity of the 'Beaux-Arts' system to the modern organisation of architectural production.

Table 2.2-2 Trends of Investment in Capital Construction and Non-productive and Residential Construction from 1950 to 1978



Source: (Zhang, Ji and Wang, Tao 2001: 103-186)

In China, the economy was a determining factor in housing production. Particularly from the 1950s to the 1970s when state guideline -- 'production first, livelihood second' -- was intended to keep the level of housing investment as low as possible, technical issues were prioritised. (Table 2.2-2) In the case of the *Principles of Housing Design*, the problems it was concerned with were 'the unification of modules, parameters and components; the housing standards and economic assessment; the design of household types and land-saving of high-rise housing; lowering the cost by reducing the use of steel'; etc.¹³⁰ There was no discussion of social and urban issues, but one chapter in particular was dedicated to 'Housing Standards and Economic Matters', i.e. how 'economic standards' led to and justified design principles

¹³⁰ Zhu, Changlian and Li, Zaishen (1980). pp.1.

and corresponding design methods. Take the 'housing standard' as an example. The textbook states:

Many countries' standards for residential areas are prescribed individually according to different household types, but our country's is to control the average standard per household. Household types and their ratios (the [number of] different household types to [the number of] total constructed households) were both left to designers to tackle according to different conditions. Therefore, the design of household types and ratios will directly affect control of the area standard.¹³¹

In response, it addresses the detailed solutions, one of which is:

To adopt several household types to meet the needs of living, and at the same time to control the average area of each household under the prescribed standard, the designs of the household types are interrelated. [...] We can squeeze the area of one household type in order to improve another household type, and even change another household type. For example, [we] squeeze the areas of two- and three-bedroom flats and add a small square lobby or a small inner room to a one-bedroom flat.¹³²

This way of addressing the 'problem' or 'target', proposing the design principles and exemplifying their applications is reiterated throughout the whole book. To what extent specific solutions are still at work seems less important than the way of thinking about and executing a 'design'. In other words, the purpose of the teaching programme in a design studio, as indicated, was to train architectural students to find practical solutions to 'given' problems rather than to encourage critical thinking about them.

¹³¹ Ibid. pp. 208. "许多国家住宅面积标准是按不同的户型分别予以规定的, 而我国是控制每户平均指标, 户型及户型比(各种户型在修建总户数中的比例)均由设计者具体处理, 所以户型及户型比的设计就直接影响到面积标准的控制。"

¹³² Ibid. pp. 209. "采用几种户型来解决居住需要, 而又将平均每户面积控制在规定指标以内, 因此各种户型的设计是互相牵扯的。[...] 我们可以采取压缩一种户型面积的办法来改善另一种户型, 甚至达到改变另一种户型的目的。如果可以压缩二、三室户的面积, 给一室户增加一个小方厅或一个小套室。"

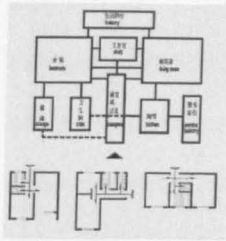


Fig. 2.2-9

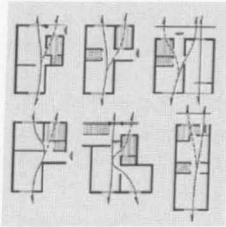


Fig. 2.2-10.

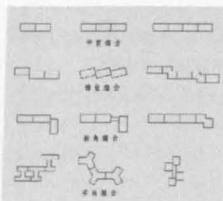


Fig. 2.2-11

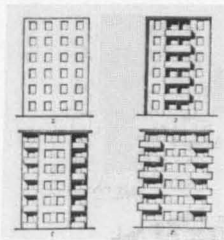


Fig. 2.2-12

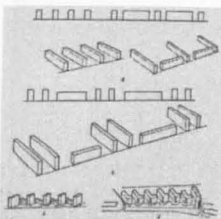


Fig. 2.2-13

The proposed solutions are not just empirical, but rely upon regulated knowledge. In general, the *Principles of Housing Design* is organised on a similar structure to *On Space Composition of Architecture*, and conveys similar functions: to formulate the design approaches and to provide available solutions. But its contents are more specific and practical. Housing design, in terms of the Principles, starts from a basic unit, a 'household' (*hu*).

A residential building can consist of one household or several households, or even tens and hundreds of households, and the internal space of one household contains several different rooms. 'Household' is the basic unit of housing design. In housing design, [we] must above all analyse and study the size and composition of a 'household', and then consider compositional relationships between households.¹³³

The textbook subsequently goes through the design principles governing household formation from the smaller parts to the larger whole: the functional rooms of a 'household'; their relationships and composition (Fig. 9, 10); and the groupings of 'households' as a 'building unit' (*danyuan*) and of building units as a single building, in three forms – one or two-storey housing, multi-storey housing and high-rise housing. (Fig. 2.2-11) At the same time, it elucidates the principles of accommodating different conditions and requirements, such as climate, topography and mixed use; industrialisation; and the consideration of appearances. (Fig. 2.2-12, 13) All the principles are elaborated with regard to function, physical performance, technological support and financial cost; with a brief analysis or

¹³³ Ibid.¹ pp.3. “一幢住宅房屋可以由一户或几户，以至几十、上百户组成，而一户住宅内部又包括若干个不同的房间。‘户’是住宅设计的单位，在住宅设计中首先必须对‘户’的大小及组成进行分析研究，然后再考虑户与户之间的组合关系。”

description of their characteristics, advantages and disadvantages and a great number of diagrams and illustrated cases – 454 figures in a total of 231 pages – which exemplify the application of the theoretical principles to the practical solutions. The textbook formulates an array of approaches through which the different requirements could inform the final products.

We have to be cautious about the effect of the textbook. In reality, many students might not have read through it and might not have adopted the specific suggestions in their projects. Instead, they might have preferred to look up the 'new' publications and the foreign journals for inspiration, 'new' forms and 'new' solutions. However, as the textbook was edited as an outline of teaching programmes, what seemed of importance was that it framed a basis for searches and appropriation in four respects. First, it framed the general problems that would be resolved in design work. Second, it framed the general programmes of the building type. Third, in response to them, it framed the principles for justifying a project and the proposed solutions. Fourth, it relates the design principles and solutions to the problems and programmes. If you like, it would work as a collection of references and resources to be selected, 'recomposed' and appropriated according to specific conditions. We can imagine that this kind of teaching outline could easily be transferred and adapted to 'real' practice.¹³⁴ At this point, we can probably conclude that the teaching programmes of the

¹³⁴ Interestingly, some graduates found that the textbooks were more useful when they practise than when they studied at school.

design studio established the knowledge base for architectural production in China.

Obviously, the three books were written for different fields and different purposes, and were based upon different materials. Indeed, except Peng Yigang's *On Space Composition of Architecture*, 'composition' was not the central issue in the *History of Chinese Architecture* and the *Principles of Housing Design*. Nevertheless, from the preceding discussions, we can see that they shared a certain common ground to abstract, interpret, structure and construct the materials, narrations, categories, methods and principles. The common ground, as far as this section is concerned, was sustained by the methodical arrangement of the 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition' – a constructed means of a 'modern' knowledge of architecture. Two points need to be highlighted. One, the methodical arrangement did not set against 'modernist' ideas, means and techniques. Both Peng Yigang's book and the *Principles of Housing Design* employed a number of 'modernist' cases. But insofar as they were abstracted from their theoretical, social and physical contexts and were relocated into the categorical structure, 'modernism' was likely fragmented and dissolved into an evolutionary sequence of 'Beaux-Arts' architecture rather than a critical opposition to it. (Fig. 2.2-14, 15) Two, because the three books were published in the early 1980s, some of their contents may not be suitable and had probably already become outdated in terms of the current architectural practices and discussions. But insofar as their structures are retained in architectural pedagogy,

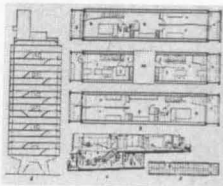


Fig. 2.2-14.



Fig. 2.2-15.

the 'Beaux-Arts' influence still underlies the productions.

To sum up, the purpose of the chapter was to explore the 'composition' – a technique of the 'Beaux-Arts' – in constituting architectural knowledge in China. The examination focuses on two issues: the complex construction of the 'new' and the 'Chinese' in architecture, and the institutionalisation of architectural knowledge. The examination reveals that the 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition', introduced from America and the Soviet Union, lent support to the discursive formation of architecture in twentieth century China – the academic convention, the identification of architectural profession, the historical research of traditional construction, the form of professional training, the regularisation of design principles and means, the categorisation of materials, and the systematic construction of 'resources'. As discussed above, the discursive constructions did not necessarily keep loyal to the 'Beaux-Arts' system of nineteenth century France or America and the Soviet Union in the twentieth century. They were rather a modification and an adaptation of the system to the particular conditions of China, whether they were political, economic, or ideological and technical. At this point, 'architecture' in China was indeed a 'modern', hybrid constitution, within which there was no such distinction between homogeneous 'Chineseness' and the 'western' importation.

References of Chapter Two

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Chapter Three

The Huangpu Garden: The 'European Style' and Production of a 'Luxury' Living

The last two chapters were concerned with the construction and operation of the concept 'modern' and the discursive formation of architectural knowledge in twentieth century China. They argued that the categories of 'western modern' and the 'new Chinese' architecture are not two homogeneous formations in opposition to each other. Rather, they are constructed on the same ground, which is marked by the absence and continuing absence of any 'modernist' discourse, and the consistent practice of a modified 'Beaux-Arts' system. We argue that the conventional differentiation of 'western' and 'Chinese' is neither appropriate nor useful in accounting for the production of architecture and urbanism in contemporary China.

The next two chapters will focus on architectural practice and debate at the turn of the twenty-first century. While the last two chapters were largely historiographical, the next two chapters, Chapter Three and Chapter Four, will take the form of two case studies of individual projects. Chapter Three will investigate a 'luxury' housing project, the Huangpu Garden in Shenzhen, and its corresponding 'European style'. The Huangpu Garden was designed in 1998 and was in full use by 2003. Chapter Four will examine a national 'display' project, the new China Central Television Headquarters (CCTV HQ) in Beijing, and the debate provoked by it. The design of the new CCTV HQ started in 2002 and its construction is supposed to be complete in 2009.¹

To an extent, the two cases represent two poles of architectural practice in China. The Huangpu Garden is an 'ordinary' commercial housing development. Its production is very much market-oriented: it was an investment of a private developer – the Hutchison Whampoa Property Group – an international corporation based in Hong Kong; its users are economic classes of the city who have enjoyed rising incomes; a local architectural office, the Chen Shiming Architects (CA), took charge of its design; and its city, Shenzhen, only has a history of twenty years, and was the pioneer for

¹ When the design competition was held, the CCTV HQ was planned to complete before 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.

developing the 'Reform and Opening' policy, the 'socialist market economy'.² The building style, the programme and the work of the architect's office are shaped and sustained by the commercial housing sector, as well as by the culture, strategy and functions of consumption.

By contrast, the new CCTV HQ is a 'significant' national monument. Its production is somewhat dominated by political considerations: its production – the building form, the programme and the management – conforms to state ideology, the articulation of state power and the media policy. It is funded by a state investment – the national media enterprise, China Central Television, who will be its sole user; a global architectural office, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), leads the architectural design. It is located in the capital, Beijing, a historical city which has struggled to combine between urban expansion and preservation.

Despite these differences, the two cases share a number of characteristics. Firstly, their construction has involved international participation and collaboration, either in the form of architectural design, or in the form of investment, materials and technologies. Secondly, they are regulated and managed, according to national and local regulation, administrative systems and conventions. Thirdly, they are both located in 'new' urban area of the two cities – the Central Business District (CBD), and are part of the programme of 'renewing' the cities at both levels of image and function. Fourthly, in a number of Chinese critiques, the 'European style' of the Huangpu Garden and the 'avant-garde' proposal of the new CCTV HQ are signs and products of the 'westernisation' of Chinese architecture and cities. This last aspect is the starting point of argument of the next two chapters, of how the two projects are produced – how they

² Shenzhen is one of the first four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in China, starting from 1980. This model penetrated in the early 1990s. '[A]ll the provincial capitals and some thirty cities along the Yangtze and on the internal borders were allowed to offer preferential policies of the SEZ type. Before long the geographical limitations simply disappeared: even rural counties set up their own "development zones" – often little more than a patch of empty land with a grand signboard over the road.' Gittings, John (2005). pp. 254. The most remarkable success of this type in the 1990s could be the new Pudong in Shanghai.

are conceived, perceived, regulated and comprehended, politically, economically, administratively, culturally and architecturally.

Before going on to a detailed examination, a few words are needed to outline the transition of architectural practice in 1980s and 1990s China. This can be characterised as a move from the state designated tasks to market commissions. At the same time, the reform of the architectural system, particularly in the 1990s, often referred to organisations and standards of the AIA and the RIBA, with the aim of adjusting to 'international standards'.³ In respect to this transition, five aspects seem worthy of remark.

In the first instance, 'architecture' has become an accepted profession, if not yet completely self-organised and based on legal protections. From 1992, graduates who fulfilled their five-year architectural training started to be awarded the 'Bachelor of Architecture' instead of the 'Bachelor of Engineering' degree. In 1994, a system of Architect Registration was inaugurated with the first examination taking place in Shenyang.⁴ Meanwhile, a nationwide organisation, the Architects Association, was set up as a branch of the Architectural Society of China in 1989. Nonetheless, although the Architectural Society of China is a legally independent body, it is basically an academic organisation.⁵ The Ministry of Construction remains its 'owner' and therefore the ultimate administrative power charged with supervision of the profession.

³ The standards and systems of the AIA and the RIBA were main references to setting up the assessment of architectural education and the Registration of Architects in China, with the aim of acquiring the exchangeable recognition in the international world. In the 1990s, “与国际接轨”, which literally means 'connecting to the international tracks', was an often mentioned phrase in architectural designs, managements, discussions and cities constructions.

⁴ In the 1990s, the system of the Architect Registration only operated partially, so called in a 'double track'. On the one hand, the examinations and registrations were systematically carried out. On the other hand, the certification of the registered architects was attached to the design companies, to which they belonged. The registered architects were not allowed to open their own offices, and did not own their certifications independently. Until very recent, some ten years after the inauguration of the Registration system, the registered architects were approved to open their own offices freely. About the 'Operation and Classification of Architectural Design Institutes' and the 'Titles, Registration and Education of Building Professionals' in the 1990s, see: Xue, Charlie Q. L. (1998). pp. 100-146.

⁵ The basic introduction of the Architectural Society of China in English can see its official website: <http://www.chinaasc.org/english/asc.php>.

Second, design firms were freed economically and became financially independent of state sponsorship. State-owned institutes began to charge design fees in the 1980s, and were responsible for their own profits and losses, even while the state retained ultimate ownership of them.⁶ In the meantime, private offices began to emerge, and the capacity and fame of individual architects became more widely appreciated and was related to their success in business.⁷

Third, international practices become increasingly involved in the design market in China.⁸ In 1991, an international consultation for the urban design of Lujiazui Financial District in Pudong was held by the Shanghai Government,⁹ and signalled a comprehensive openness to international practice from commercial projects to municipal and infrastructure construction. Nonetheless, the projects were to be completed in a joint form. According to state regulations, international offices are only allowed to go as far as undertaking schematic designs. Locally qualified and registered Chinese architectural firms must take charge of the design of construction details. So, the extent of collaboration between international practice and local design firms was legally determined.¹⁰

⁶ The standard of design fee that current practice follows is the revised three-volume document on the standard of survey and design fees issued by the State Price Administration and the Ministry of Construction in 1992. (《工程勘察收费标准(1992年修订本)》,《工程设计收费标准(第一册)(1992年修订本)》,《工程设计收费标准(第二册)(1985)》,价费字[1992]375号) In English literature, Charlie Q. L. Xue's book *Building Practice in China* has a brief introduction on it. See: Xue, Charlie Q. L. (1998). pp. 147-185.

⁷ In 1995, the Minister of Construction issued a document on the experiment of private office, which allowed 'each coastal or provincial capital city to have one to three private firms of architectural design as an experiment'. (《私营设计事务所试点办法》) Ibid. pp. 118-121. The Shenzhen Zuo Xiaosi Architect Office was the first private architectural design office in China since the 1950s. It was opened in January 1994, and is a First Grade firm approved by the Ministry of Construction. Nonetheless, in reality, there were many private studios and freelances in design market. The number of them was unclear and was not officially recorded. They worked in the market and with the administrative system in different forms. For instance, they could work under the umbrella of a state-owned company on the basis of commercial relationship, or collaborated with different ones on the basis of individual project.

⁸ Li, Wuying (2005).

⁹ Richard Rogers from Britain, Dominique Perrault from France, Toyo Ito from Japan and Massimiliano Fuksas from Italy were invited. Shanghai Lujiazui Corporation, Ltd. (2001).

¹⁰ The regulation of course has its advantages and disadvantages. And how much it intends to protect the role of Chinese architects in the market is unknown. However, the collaboration does ensure that the realisation of the design proposals conforms to the local regulations, prescriptions, conventions,

Fourth, the pedagogy of architectural training was further unified and standardised. A national assessment of architectural education was inaugurated in 1992, under the auspices of the Ministry of Construction and the Ministry of Education.¹¹ The average training time at undergraduate level was extended to five years, and the number of architectural schools increased from eight in 1978 to nearly sixty in 1997. Nonetheless, except for new courses on the Construction Act, computer skills, etc., the curriculum structure largely remained that which had existed in the 1950s.¹²

Last, despite the rise of practice, architectural criticism was basically lacking during the period.¹³ The reason for this is historically, politically and culturally complicated, but state control of the press and publication should not be ignored. At least by the end of the 1990s, there was no architectural journal and press in private sector hands, although their daily business was largely dependent upon the market.

In brief, the reform of architectural system in China from the 1980s up to the present day has combined the continuity of the state administrative system with the operation of the market economy. The interplay of these two forces together with the 'tradition' of modern Chinese architecture in China forms the background of the next two chapters.

technologies and market.

¹¹ In 1994, the Ministry of Construction issued the Provisional Stipulations of Education Assessment of Building-related Subjects in Universities. 《高等学校建筑类专业教育评估暂行规定》(中华人民共和国建设部令第 35 号)

¹² Since the end of the 1990s, the joint workshops between architectural schools in China and in the other countries have been a popular form of teaching. The influence of the exchanging courses indeed deserves further observation and study. But insofar as they are short-term supplementary courses -- normally ten days and the longest ones less than one month, and are not included into the formal curricular and the assessment system, this thesis will not take them into account.

¹³ In the last couple of years, the situation is getting change. Some professional critics have emerged, although in very small number. They constantly write to newspapers and journals. Meanwhile, some public media, such as *Nanfang Weekend* and *Sanlian Life Weekly*, frequently give certain space to architectural critique and commentary. Architectural schools, such as the one at Tsinghua University, have the course on 'architectural criticism'. Worth of mention, as Chang Yung Ho and Zhu Jianfei have pointed out, most of the critics, are not from architectural background, but from the other discipline, such as literature, art, etc.

This chapter is about architectural practice in contemporary China. It will examine the role of architectural practice in the production process, and the conditions under which they become commercialised. For this, we will look at an 'ordinary', commercial housing project of the kind which is the bread and butter of architectural practice. The point of the chapter is that, instead of being an 'autonomous' discipline, architecture is a modern practice which is regulated by, corresponds to and serves the requirements of urban inhabitation, the *rationale* of city construction and the operation of the commercial system. Modern conditions in both the urban environment and commerce enable the *recognisability* of architectural profession and the prosperity of architectural practices to arise. In turn the objects, techniques and products imported from European and American architecture are incorporated to serve these conditions.

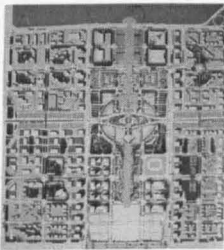


Fig. 3.0-1

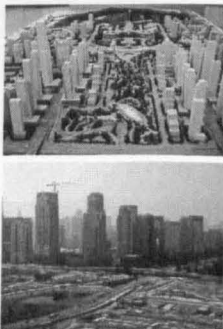


Fig. 3.0-2

This chapter is a case study of a 'luxury' housing development Huangpu Garden in Shenzhen. Huangpu Garden is located in a new urban area, Shenzhen Central District (SZCD), which intends to act both as a catalyst for the city's development and a showcase of its future. (Fig. 3.0-1, 2) Huangpu Garden is part of the urban project and operates as a supplementary residential area. It is the largest development in the district, and has been invested in by one of the biggest Chinese developers, the Hutchison Whampoa Property Group, an international corporation based in Hong Kong. In 2002 and 2003, it was one of the best selling housing developments in the Shenzhen real estate market.¹⁴ Nevertheless, in contrast to its popularity in the marketplace, the Huangpu Garden is not

¹⁴ Huangpu Garden is known as one of the top ten residential developments in Shenzhen. According to official statistics, the sold amount and floor area of Huangpu Garden were respectively third and first in 2002, and sixth and third in 2003. This information is from the official website of the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Land Resources and Housing Management, <http://www.szfdc.gov.cn/fdcgl/tjyfx.htm>, access date: 02 March 2006.

highly regarded by professional and academic architects.¹⁵ It seems both too ordinary and commercial to be taken seriously. However, it is this very quality of 'ordinariness' that enables us to explore the actual practice of architecture.

The term 'luxury' in housing property (*haohua zhuzhai*) has only recently appeared as an issue in the real estate market of China. Along with the penetration of the commercialisation and growth of cities, 'luxury' (*haohua*) has become a frequently used word in a number of different situations – trade exhibitions, advertisements, newspapers, and daily conversation.¹⁶ The promotion of 'luxury' has accompanied a considerable number of housing construction projects, the emergence of various architectural styles, as well as the improvement of housing provision. It generally marks a 'boom time' for architectural practice in contemporary China. But 'luxury' has never been an architectural concept, and exists as one only in a merely practical sense in European, American and Chinese architecture. Indeed, from a conventional viewpoint, 'luxury' is often identified with 'waste, vulgarity and poor taste'. Its attributes seem in opposition to a 'modernist' belief in efficiency and simplicity. Meanwhile, the commercial nature of 'luxury' challenges and opposes the aspiration of architecture to be a self-organised theoretical and practical discipline. 'Luxury' is determined more by clients than by architects, and is more oriented towards

¹⁵ The chief architect of the project of Huangpu Garden complained that because the professionals and academia paid attention to the appearance of the building and the innovative ideas, Huangpu Garden did not receive enough appreciation from the point of view of occupation.

¹⁶ 'Luxury' housing property, (*haohua zhuzhai*) (豪华住宅, 豪宅). 'Luxury', (*haohua*) (豪华).

consumption than architects' ideas. The pursuit of it to some purist architects 'threatens the social role and livelihoods of architects'.¹⁷

In the Chinese architectural and academic context, the resistance to commercial ideas of 'luxury' is not so different from that existing in the European and American contexts. But in everyday practice, the idea of 'luxury' is not only accepted, but also actually promoted by architects. The fact is that the current prosperity of architectural practice in China is sustained by commercialisation, from which process the category of 'luxury' comes. Resistance to and the acceptance of 'luxury' raise the question: how are we to understand the nature of architectural practice under the condition of commercialisation?

In general understanding, 'luxury' (*haohua*) in Chinese has two principal meanings: extravagance and visible status.¹⁸ Compared with the meanings denoted in English – great comfort and inessential but desired items –, 'luxury' in Chinese is more concerned with material ostentation and its social effects. The general cultural definition does not suggest the seamless signification that exists in the architectural context. But it gives a clue to the social and cultural context within which the production of 'luxury' is situated, comprehended and perceived. One aim of this chapter is to see how the idea of 'luxury' takes up the form of commercial housing developments in the cities and in architectural practice.

¹⁷ Davies, Paul (1998).

¹⁸ Cihai (1979). pp.824.

3.1 Profile of the 'Luxury' Living

In the real estate market of China, 'luxury' housing arises from the general commercialisation of the housing system. National housing policy shifted from a welfare system to one based on market supply in the 1980s.¹⁹ After ten years of reform, the idea of 'luxury' living emerged in the mid-1990s. At an economic level, we might think that the level of 'luxury' would be linked to price. However, since 'luxury' is not only used to refer to the most expensive townhouses and villas, but also used to articulate some of the features of normal commercial housing units, it is not just a matter of price.

The Huangpu Garden (generally known in English by its French name, Le Parc) has been regarded as a 'luxury' housing development in Shenzhen. (Fig. 3.1-1) When it was on sale in 2003, a local journalist remarked:



Fig. 3.1-1

Regarding the luxury housings in Shenzhen Central District (SZCD), the Huangpu Garden will be inevitably referred to. Located at the intersection of Fuzhong Road and Mintian Road, it is sitting at the heart of Shenzhen CBD. The whole development occupies 156,000 square meters land, and will provide 437,000 square meters floor area. The Huangpu Garden is so far the **largest** residential project in SZCD.

The Huangpu Garden is built up in four phases. Every phase exhibits a **distinct theme of noble courtyards in Europe**. The Phase Four Parc Paris on sale now is a French romantic garden. Through three years' development, the Huangpu Garden has formed the **sufficient** atmosphere as a high quality neighbourhood. It offers all necessities of daily life, including one big and unique Clubhouse, two kindergartens, one primary school, one secondary school, one supermarket and one bus stop.²⁰

¹⁹ By welfare system, I mean that housing units were essentially owned by the state or state agencies and distributed outside the relation of buying and selling. The economic relation between the state and the occupiers was expressed in a small rent, even though this was heavily subsidised by the state.

²⁰ Cao, Yin (2003). "提到深圳市中心区的豪宅，不能不提到黄埔雅苑。它位于福中路与民田路交

From this remark, three features of the 'luxury' of the Huangpu Garden can be identified. They form a distinct image relating to an imaginary 'Europe', which is indicated by the 'European style' (or 'Continental European style')²¹ in the property market, the large scale of the housing development and the level of the services provided. This chapter will elucidate each of these features.

Two preliminary points should be noted. Firstly, although entitled 'luxury', the Huangpu Garden is not a residential area reserved for a few rich people, but is provided for a range of customers. Its large scale – accommodating 3,006 households and the high floor area ratio (FAR) 2.8²² – means that the Huangpu Garden may be defined as a 'mass production' neighbourhood. The range of prices and the household sizes of the Huangpu Garden are targeted at families from mid-income to high-income groups in the city. Its selling price varies from the common commercial housing price of 6,000 *yuan* per square metre to the more expensive villa price of 25,000 *yuan* per square metre. The average price of its Phase Four at 9,500 *yuan* per square metre

汇处，是深圳 CBD 的心脏部分。项目占地 15.6 万平方米，总建筑面积达 43.7 万平方米，是目前中心区规模最大的豪宅项目。

黄埔雅苑分四期开发，每一期都体现出不同的欧陆贵族庭院主题。目前正在发售的四期骏悠园为法国式浪漫园林。经过三年的发展，黄埔雅苑已经形成了成熟的高尚社区氛围，小区内设有全深圳首创大型主题式会所、两所幼儿园、一所小学、一所中学，还拥有大型超市、公交站等，提供一切日常生活所需。”

²¹ The 'European style', (*oufeng*), (欧风); the 'continental European style', (*oulufeng*), (欧陆风, 欧陆风情)。

²² FAR and density are two key planning specifications for designing a residential area. FAR, floor area ratio, is a ratio of the total floor area to the total land area. Density means a ratio of the total footprint area of the building(s) to the total land area. FAR and density indicate different aspects of land use. The former refers to the capacity of the land, and the latter is about the intensity of land use. As a high-rise accommodation, while possessing a high capacity, Huangpu Garden has large ground land for open space. In the market and architectural practice, the strategy is called 'high rise, lower density' (*gaoceng, dimidu*) (高层低密度)。

is somewhat higher than that it is for the same zone in Futian District.²³ The gross area of the apartments varies from 77 square metres to 323 square metres, and the household types from the two-bedroom flat to the five-bedroom duplex.²⁴ Of the various household types, the three-bedroom flat – the most popular, practical and economic unit in the market – constitutes the majority.²⁵ In this respect, the Huangpu Garden does not propose lifestyles different from general urban living arrangements. In terms of the price, the household types and targeted buyers, the so-called 'luxurious' features of the Huangpu Garden largely meet the desires of potential buyers for a degree of quality modern living during this period of commercialisation.

The second aspect is an effect of the reformed housing policy. As mentioned above, the reform of Chinese national housing policy started in the mid-1980s. The comprehensive transformation, with the aim of 'commodification' and

²³ Huangpu Garden was built up and was sold in four phases. In the year, the average price of residential housing in the Futian District was 8,211 yuan/sq. m. See: Wang, Peng (2003). From the official website of Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Land Resources and Housing Management.

²⁴ The construction area of an apartment includes the floor area of the apartment and the distributed circulation and service area of the building.

²⁵ Three-bedroom flat suits the structure of current families in Chinese cities – one child family with occasionally hosting guest, temporarily having a maid, or permanently living with the elder generation. In the Phase Four of Huangpu Garden, the floor area of one three-bedroom flat varies from 96 sq. m. to 137 sq. m. The typical arrangement of the unit consists of one master bedroom, one kid bedroom, one guest room, one living room, one dining room, one kitchen and one bathroom (*sanfang liangting*) (三房两厅). According to the area, the unit could have one more bathroom for the master bedroom and one potential maid room. In the real estate market, the three-bedroom flat has been a major household type. 'In terms of the sold household types [in 2003], two-bedroom flat, three-bedroom flat and four-bedroom flat continued to be the main types in property market. They occupied more than 80% trading amount in the housing market. Out of the total sold floor area of commercial housing, the three-bedroom flat covered 42%, two-bedroom flat 23%, and the four-bedroom flat 17%. In terms of the selling price, the average of the three-bedroom flat was 5,006 yuan/sq. m, which was cheapest in the household units. Two-bedroom flat was second cheapest, 5,340 yuan/sq. m; and four-bedroom flat reached 6,464 yuan/sq. m.' See: Wang, Peng (2003).

‘socialisation’ was intensified in the mid-1990s.²⁶ In the case of Shenzhen, which was established in 1980, housing reform has taken place over the last twenty years. In 1988, Shenzhen Municipal Government issued the first local scheme for housing reform in China, *A Reform Scheme for the Housing System of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone*. From then until 1999, housing was supplied on the basis of ‘two tracks’ (government and private developers) through ‘three forms’ (welfare housing, state funded affordable housing and commercial housing), as well as in ‘multiple prices’ (building cost, construction cost, nominal profit price, socially affordable price, and market price).²⁷ In 2000, the welfare housing in building costs and construction costs were no longer provided.²⁸ Previous welfare housing is sold to occupants with complete rights of private ownership. During this process, the property market has increasingly become the main supplier of housing. (Table 3-1; Table 3-2) The reform of housing policy may not bring about fundamental changes to the nature of housing design, the organisation of urban inhabitation and the means of building construction, but it profoundly affects the way in which housing is produced and distributed and consequently the way in which individuals’ inhabit the city.

²⁶ Lü, Junhua, Rowe, Peter and Zhang, Ji (2001), pp.189-192; Lü, Junhua and Shao, Lei (2003). The term, ‘socialisation’ (*shehuihua*, 社会化), could be confusing since in Europe ‘socialisation’ is normally associated with a withdraw of goods and service from the market and their subsequent distribution on non-commodity basis. In China, the term as it is used here has a reverse meaning – something like the return of property of the state to society in general and to the market in particular.

²⁷ The items which the building cost, construction cost, nominal profit, social affordable price should include are detailed by the Shenzhen Municipal Government (1999). The major difference between these types of housing and commercial housing is that their prices do not contain the land price.

²⁸ While welfare housing was abolished in 2000, affordable housing was allowed to be held on the basis of the same property ownership as commercial housing. It meant that the house owners of affordable housing could rent and sell their properties on the market.

Table 3-1 全社会住宅投资 Investment in residential housing

单位: 万元

(1979-2002)

(10,000 yuan)

年份 Year	合计 Total	基本建设 Capital Construction	更新改造 Technical Updates and Transform ation	房地产开发 Investment in Commodity Houses	集体经济 单位 Collective - owned Units	城建私人建 房 Buildings Construction by Individuals	其 他 Others
1979		914					
1980		2838					
1981		6428					
1982		19021					
1983		27640					
1984		38372	34				
1985		64827	36				
1986	46 940	32656	15		2918	11351	
1987	54 629	36269	88		4228	14044	
1988	114 993	78522			4745	31726	
1989	123 617	101466	189		7478	14484	
1990	164 518	92429	20	50554	1663	19852	
1991	315 480	173346	425	100094	11704	29911	
1992	703 879	342331	519	268007	40464	52558	
1993	582 283	161494	100	337090	33836	49763	
1994	616 790	177141		359373	38907	41369	
1995	795 949	187993	2296	487022	53108	65530	
1996	859 803	153068	6220	544541	85575	70399	1000
1997	1 135 054	146509	1766	855049	47015	84715	
1998	1 500 548	261719	4800	998850	107458	116617	11104
1999	1 874 853	259989	1065	1413106	84424	101817	14452
2000	2 185 495	217496	3346	1786789	115320	61344	900
2001	2 341 654	220698	6316	1967062	69616	67631	10331
2002	2 716 596	143975	583	2379217	133809	58999	13

Source: Table 6-8 (Shenzhen, Statistics Bureau 2003).

Table 3-2 全社会住宅施工建筑面积 Floor space of residential housing under construction

单位: 万平方米

(1979-2002)

(10000 sq.m)

年份 Year	合计 Total	基本建设 Capital Construction	更新改造 Technical Updates and Transfor mation	房地产开发 Investment in Commodity Houses	集体经济 单位 Collective - owned Units	城建私人建 房 Buildings Construction by Individuals	其 他 Others
1979		13.41					
1980		27.81					
1981		43.34					
1982		128.30					
1983		155.68					
1984		258.52					
1985		362.70					
1986	366.59	284.92	0.37		12.46	68.84	
1987	339.69	228.10	0.15		24.30	87.14	
1988	447.03	342.03			18.04	86.69	
1989	434.43	364.58	0.99		23.78	45.08	
1990	359.73	133.49	0.03	158.86	10.13	57.22	
1991	604.58	190.63	8.77	252.61	54.70	97.87	
1992	920.04	200.16	0.79	480.23	105.72	133.14	
1993	1032.92	231.73	0.20	640.19	65.82	94.98	
1994	1090.32	324.46		614.40	64.72	86.74	
1995	1443.72	406.46	8.33	844.17	86.94	98.72	
1996	1474.14	325.21	2.33	940.61	107.50	98.49	
1997	1465.45	285.19	1.29	966.19	102.35	110.43	
1998	1866.76	400.22	0.65	1146.97	149.25	159.73	9.94
1999	1944.88	274.59	0.10	1355.62	157.23	143.95	13.39
2000	2059.39	247.72	0.31	1576.89	159.26	73.43	1.78
2001	2261.63	248.35	3.40	1790.49	120.41	81.38	17.6
2002	2575.33	159.16	1.36	2124.86	151.11	134.75	4.09

Source: Table 6-9 (Shenzhen, Statistics Bureau 2003).

3.2 Production of the 'Luxury'

3.2.1 *The Vagueness of 'European Style'*

Returning to the issue of the 'luxury' image of housing development, the 'luxury' housing developments often adopt the form of the 'European style' in the real estate market of contemporary China. As with the phrase 'western modern', an English-speaking reader will find the term 'European style' obscure because of course no such style exists in European architecture. This section will look into the architectural and social organisation upon which the 'European style' is designed and constructed.

From the journalist's remarks, we know that the Huangpu Garden, particularly its themed gardens, represents the 'European style' with its signification of 'luxury'. The Huangpu Garden consists of four phases, which are named Parc Rome, Parc Barcelona, Parc Vienna and Parc Paris, and each has communal gardens that have accordingly adopted the 'Roman style', the 'Spanish style', the 'Austrian style' and the 'French style'. The international landscape office of Belt Collins took charge of their design and somehow lends an impression of being 'genuinely' European.²⁹ However, instead of being imitations of 'originals', right from the visual character to the spatial arrangement and design principles they rather constitute their own type of composition.

²⁹ The Belt Collins is not a landscape office from Europe. It is a commercial office originating from the USA, and its branch in Hong Kong was commissioned to this project. Apart from the Huangpu Garden, it has designed a number of similar themed gardens in Shenzhen.

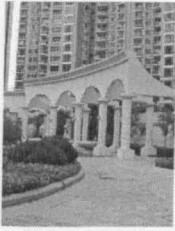


Fig. 3.2-1

Take the Versailles Plaza in the Phase Four Parc Paris (Fig. 3.2-1). In the marketing promotion, the 'French style' upholds the theme of the 'romantic', which is represented by repetitive curves. The Versailles Plaza is a symmetrically elliptical square at the main pedestrian entrance, and an oval fountain made of black granite marks its centre, with a fountain topped with a sculpture of a careering chariot. Two curved colonnades in a simplified 'Baroque' style stand at the edge of the square, and a curved line is used as the geometric prototype that forms the floor pattern. The arrangement in no way obeys or represents the principles or design of the French garden. (Fig. 3.2-2) Instead, names and elements are appropriated to hold up certain visual distinctions and to lend substance to some figurative meanings. For instance, the figures of the sculpture may derive from the Apollo Basin of the formal garden at the chateau de Versailles, but instead of being associated with solar myth, they embody the auspicious meaning of the 'fine horse', i.e. 'running towards the bright future' according to a traditional Chinese interpretation. In addition, by marking the entrance to the development, the plaza and the featured sculpture intensify the distinction made between the inside and the outside and the transition from public space to the private realm. Thus, certain ideas and components 'abstracted' from 'elsewhere' are reconstructed to create 'new' and different images from the monotonous housing projects of the past.

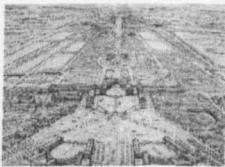


Fig. 3.2-2

Two points can be made about this 'European style' and its

expression of 'luxury', which concern the Chinese invention in the context of modern Chinese architecture and its excessive 'materiality'. The 'European style' emerged in the mid-1990s, and has prevailed in the real estate market of China as a 'fashion' statement ever since. Rather than restricting itself to residential buildings, it has been broadly applied to different architectural types. Due to the considerable scope of its application, Zou Denong records it as one of the phenomena of contemporary Chinese architecture in *A History of Modern Chinese Architecture*.



Fig. 3.2-3

The so called 'European style' or 'European mode' probably originates from request of developers for designing 'villa-like' houses, or from the words of advisement, or presumably from the intention of interior contractors and designers to cater to the clients' preference of 'luxury' and 'nobility'.³⁰

Soon after, the commercial-promoting style 'has become a fashion pursued by local officials and architects, passively or actively', and 'has taken up the presences of houses, apartment housings, public buildings and urban designs'.³¹ (Fig. 3.2-3) Nonetheless, if one asks what 'European style' is, and what kind of 'origins' it refers to, one would find it completely ambiguous. Zou Denong points out,

'European style' is a very vague concept. In strict terms, 'European style', 'European manner' and 'European form' do not even exist at all. Europe is a geographic concept which generally means the

³⁰ Zou, Denong (2001). pp.480. "所谓'欧陆风'或'欧陆风情'有可能源于房地产开发商在设计'别墅式'建筑时的设计要求或广告词,也可能是店面和室内装修商和设计师在设计中迎合业主'豪华'、'高贵'包装时的用心。" In this section, I will largely quote Zou Denong's comments on the 'European style' for two reasons. Firstly, his comments are so far the most complete description and summary that I have seen on the issue. There are indeed many critiques of the 'European style' in academic circles. But most of them are brief. Nonetheless, the second reason is that from my point of view, Zou's points basically represent most of the critiques.

³¹ Ibid. The original texts are: " '欧陆风情' 发展成地方官员和建筑师们被动或主动追求的时尚, 其社会内涵就不能轻视了。" " '欧陆风情' 在小住宅、公寓、公共建筑和城市设计中都有表现。"

continent of Europe. In terms of space, which particular country does it address? In terms of time, which historical period does it point to? If considering the masses’ comprehension of architectural knowledge in present China, the general speaking of the ‘European style’ could be acquiesced. But if it is used to direct the designs of architects, that would be very inappropriate.

Because of this, the adopted components of the ‘European style’ buildings are very inconsistent. For instance, in most cases, western classical architecture is regarded as the ‘European style’, without considering the characteristics of specific region in Europe. The situation delivers a wrong message to the public, and also makes foreign friends feel confused.³²

Zou’s viewpoint is supported by Lǔ and Shao’s description.

Regarding the ‘European style’ as a sign of a ‘growing rate of household consumption’, they write:

Many real estate development projects had a preference for the so-called Continental European style, which had no specific definition, and only referred to the classical Western style in general, combining an exotic atmosphere with high-rise residential structures and forming a novel landscape for purchasers. Most such houses manifested this Continental European style through adopting the colours, column order, artificial molding and roofs of Western classic architecture.³³

From these two commentaries it is clear that the ‘European style’, which has ‘no specific definition’ nor ‘origin’, is a Chinese invention. The resources that it absorbs are architecture in Europe before ‘modernism’. What is interesting about it is yet another problematic concept, the ‘western classical’ (*xifang gudian*)³⁴, in the construction of the ‘European style’ and its relation to the ‘modern’ in Chinese architecture.

³² Ibid. pp. 480. “‘欧陆风情’是一个非常模糊的概念，严格地说，甚至根本不存在什么‘欧陆风’‘欧陆风情’‘欧陆式’。欧陆是一个地理概念，泛指欧洲大陆。在空间上，‘欧陆’是指哪个国家？在时间，是指哪个历史时期？就目前社会公众对建筑的认识而言，泛谈‘欧陆风’倒也罢了，如果用来指示建筑师做建筑设计，那就很不恰当了。

因此，这类‘欧陆风情’建筑，在形式的采用上十分混乱。例如，在大多数情况下，把西洋古典建筑当成‘欧陆风情’，同时又忽视欧洲地域性建筑的个性特征。这样，就给公众展示了错误的信息，也让外国朋友感到莫名其妙。”

³³ Lǔ, Junhua and Shao, Lei (2001). pp.276.

³⁴ ‘Western classical’ (*xifang gudian*) (西方古典).

The 'western classical' is a more academic or professional category. People at large do not seem to have a very clear distinction between the 'western classical' and the 'modern' or 'western modern'. Fei Xiaohua, an architect from Shenzhen, has recalled his experience³⁵:

What is modern? Different people have different ideas. I went to Guizhou. The client wanted a modern building. I asked him what kind of modern he wanted, because I knew we must have different understandings. He said something different from what they had. I told him there were too many things different from their local buildings. It was unclear. Finally, I got his point. What he wanted was the buildings with the western classical symbols, such as columns, pediments, etc. It was his modern. I never call it modern. Modern is a rather ambiguous concept which has caused a lot of communication difficulties between architects and clients and the officials from government.³⁶

Fei's story is not exceptional. One can find the same in Zou's writing. I myself had the same experiences of 'misunderstanding' when practicing architecture in China. The confusion once again demonstrates that Chinese architecture has not experienced the 'moment' of 'modernism'. In general cultural terms, the 'modern' has operated as a broad category, accounting for all the imports from Europe and the USA as things 'new' and 'different' in a local context. Although China now is more open to the outside world, the conceptual 'mistranslation' has not only continued but also expanded.

³⁵ Fei Xiaohua has experiences in both China and the USA. He was trained as an architect at Tongji University and received his master degree there in 1987. From 1987 to 1999, he practiced architecture in Shanghai and Shenzhen, and taught at Shenzhen University. In 1999, he went to the States and studied a master course on urban design at the University of Washington. In 2001, Fei came back to Shenzhen and set up his own practice X-urban Consultants (Shenzhen), Ltd.

³⁶ Interview with Fei Xiaohua by Hua Li, January 2006. "什么是现代? 不同的人有不同的理解。我曾经到贵州。当地的业主说要一个现代建筑。我问他想要什么样的现代建筑, 因为我知道我们的想法肯定不一样。他说和他们那儿不一样的。我告诉他太多的东西和他们那儿不一样了, 这非常不清楚。最后, 我明白了。他想要的就是那种有西方古典符号的建筑, 有柱式、山花什么的。这就是他的现代。我从来不会叫它现代。现代是一个相当含糊不清的概念, 它造成了很多建筑师、业主和政府官员之间沟通的困难。"

In professional accounts, the 'western classical' is also ambiguous. The 'western classical' generally acts as the opposite of the 'western modern' mainly on a formal basis. The Chinese concept of the 'western classical' generally takes architecture as a whole in Europe and the USA before modernism, it naturally differs from the definition of 'classical' architecture in Europe and America, which is confined to ancient Greece and Rome. In China, the architecture of Greece and Rome, and the mediaeval architecture of the Gothic period, as well as the Renaissance, Baroque and revivalist architectural styles, are all counted in the same category. The task of dissecting the differences between the Chinese 'western classical' and the European 'classical' is beyond the focus of the thesis. The point here is that although Chinese architects regard the components of the 'European style' as something abstracted from the 'western classical', the 'European style' is not so much 'classical' but 'modern'. As shown above, the 'European style' does not obey any single principle, nor follow any particular style or 'language'. The way in which it takes in a range of 'classical' components, as well as the 'modern' materials, techniques and forms, such as the 'glass curtain wall', corresponds roughly to the rule of the 'Beaux-Arts' composition, which has dominated design method in Chinese architecture since the 1920s. Disregarding the referential sources and images, the figurative character of the 'European style' actually remains the symbolic relationship between architectural elements and forms and meanings of the 'Chinese inherent

style' in the 1920s, of the 'national style' in the 1950s, and of the 'regional and vernacular' architecture that has existed since the 1980s. This shows again that the 'composition' as a systematically organised technique enables different symbolisations in different conditions.

To some people, the 'European style' in China may seem to follow a typical track of 'postmodernism' in its eclectic, decorative and figurative character. The architects from the Belt Collins are probably not trained under the 'Beaux-Arts' system. But as the themed garden of the Huangpu Garden shows, the market-oriented 'European style' has nothing at all to do with the nostalgia, contextualism and historicism of 'postmodernist' discourse as its reaction to the break of 'modernism' from history. For international practices, it is just a business to cope with the requirements of local markets and clients. In fact, the 'European style' is not an exception to China. We can find similar phenomena in many places outside Europe, such as the USA. That is to say, the systematic creation of the 'otherness' as an image of being 'luxury' or 'distinct' is particularly an architectural phenomenon of modernity or a phenomenon of 'modern' architecture. Nonetheless, in the context of Chinese architecture, the convergence of 'postmodernism' and the tradition of modern Chinese architecture, and the lack of 'postmodernist' discourse in the 'European style' itself demonstrates again the lack of 'modernist' discourse in both the history of modern Chinese architecture and in current architectural practice.

The 'European style' has been criticised in Chinese academia. Most of the critiques are concerned with the impact of consumption, 'vulgarity' and the imitation of the 'west'. According to Zou Denong:

From the viewpoint of architectural creation, doing the 'European style' is an imitation, which essentially loses most of the significance of architectural creation. Because the 'European style' is a thing of the 'others', decorating a building by it is an action of transplanting. Although it allows certain alterations, transplantation should not lose basic quality of beauty. At the time of promoting architectural innovation, the inferior imitation in a large amount runs to the opposite direction of architectural progress.³⁷

The announcement that the 'European style' is a thing of the 'others' is of course problematic. It indeed contradicts Zou's own point that the 'European style' does not exist in the context of European architecture. In my view, the contradiction stems from the conflict of two critiques. At the design level, the question of the 'European style' is the problem of 'imitation', and further the 'inferior imitation', rather than the 'imitation of the west'. The act of 'imitation', on the one hand, undermines architectural design at least as an 'original creation', and hence the position of architectural profession; on the other hand, the 'inferior imitation' weakens the speciality of the profession and professional practice, which has been sustained and protected by the regulated knowledge and training. At this point, the problem of the 'European style' is not a matter of importation, but a matter of improper design act, as Zou states,

As to importation, imitation or imitation-based innovation of

³⁷ Zou, Denong (2001). pp.480-481. “从建筑创作的角度讲，搞‘欧陆风’师一种模仿，模仿本身就失去了建筑创作的大部分意义。因为‘欧陆风’是别人的东西，用它来装饰建筑，是一种移植行为，虽说可以有些变化，一般应该不失基本的美学特征。在鼓励建筑创新的今天，大力实行粗糙的模仿，与建筑进步的方向背道而驰。”

foreign architectures, [we] must keep the most brilliant factors of architecture. This kind of ‘keep’ should be the most genuine representation [of them].³⁸

In terms of the identification of Chinese architects, the problem of the ‘European style’ becomes more complex. To define the ‘European style’ as a thing of the ‘others’ reflects the two categories of accounting for the ‘origins’ of architecture in China, the ‘Chinese’ and the ‘others’. We have discussed in Chapter Two that the insistence in the pursuit of a ‘Chinese root’ in ‘modern’ creation historically relates to the legitimization of the status of Chinese architects in the society. The prevalence of the ‘European style’ somehow challenges this identification. As in the case of the Huangpu Garden, the commission of Belt Collins indicates a sort of privilege of the foreign architectural offices in the commercial strategies. In one way of the other, the anxiety and worries that the ‘European style’ arouses are not simply an issue of ‘style’ or an issue of taste, but rather points to the dominance of consumption values that take over architectural production and thereby threaten the position of Chinese architects. The critique thus turns into an appeal to re-examine the loss of responsibility by architects. Zou writes as follows:

To architects, to distinguish different architectural styles and to meet clients’ requests by various architectural languages are the basically specialist skill and the professional responsibility. To deliver correct architectural information to clients and publics through serious design is the basic principle of architectural practice. In the storm of the ‘European style’, a number of projects are greatly off the standard, because of subordination to the clients’ unreasonable requirements, drives of the economic interests, and the lack of acknowledging the basic architectural types and

³⁸ Ibid. pp. 482. “对于外国建筑的引入、模仿或在模仿的基础上加以创新，必然应保持这种建筑的最精彩的因素，这种保持又应该是最真实的写照。”

compositional orders. The role of architects in the ‘European style’ needs to be reconsidered.³⁹

But some architects, particularly practising architects, hold a different view. Xiao Lan and Lu Jia, two architects from Shenzhen, attempt to defend the ‘European style’ by extolling its ‘newness’ and ‘uniqueness’ in the built environment, its success and popularity in the market, and the importance of designers in these achievements.

Along with the accelerating growth of the nationwide real estate market, the housing industry of Shenzhen never ceases in its pursuit of the ‘new’ and the ‘distinct’. It is no longer satisfied with the general ‘European style’ and the large green area of the properties. Thus, themed residential developments have grown up on brand new land in Shenzhen. It exhibits a more distinguished exotic sense, and represents an integral style from layout to built environment, embodying the thematic character in detail, and is filled with the joys of life.

[...]

Facing the competitive market, the design of themed housing development largely strengthens the competing capacity of the property. [...] **Designers who act as planners and implementers of the themed housing developments somehow lead the orientation of the market.**⁴⁰

Xiao and Lu express an opposite view to that of Zou. Instead of regarding commerce as a negative force upon architectural practice, they see it as an opportunity to uphold a professional specialisation, the role of the architect in the market, and the significance of architect’s work in society. From their point of view, the value of architectural design is not defined so much by

³⁹ Ibid. pp.481. “对建筑师而言，区别各种建筑风格，运用多种建筑语言满足不同业主的要求，既是自己的基本专业技巧也是职业责任。以严肃的创作态度，给业主和公众以正确的建筑信息，是建筑师的基本执业准则。在这场‘欧陆风’的风潮中，或屈从于业主‘关公战秦琼’式的要求，或因为经济的利益，或不掌握基本的建筑类型或构图的法度，致使出现一些大失水准的设计。建筑师在‘欧陆风’中的作用，值得深思。” Zou’s points may not be agreed on by every Chinese architect, especially young Chinese architects. But the general argument against the dominance of commerce over architectural design, bad taste and the loss of architectural quality is widely shared. For instance, Fei Xiaohua thought some of the ‘European style’ buildings vulgar. Interview with Fei Xiaohua by Hua Li, January 2006. Ding Wowo saw its highly decorative style as the impact of commodification upon architecture. Ding, Wowo (2004).

⁴⁰ Xiao, Lan and Lu, Jia (2002).

conventional judgements of 'design quality', such as 'authentic' representation of the 'style' or the representation of 'Chineseness', but by its effect upon the market value of the properties. Yet, there is no real difference between Zou and Xiao and Lu regarding architecture as a social practice demanded both by clients and the market.

The question here is: what does the 'European style' mean in the context of 'luxury'? When the 'European style' and the 'themes' that are supposed to mark out a 'distinctive identity' are repeated in the real estate market, the claim of the 'uniqueness' is undermined. To understand this, we need to look at an expression of the 'luxury' – excessive 'materiality', by which we mean a proliferation of objects.



Fig. 3.2-4

In the case of the Huangpu Garden, the themes are addressed through processes of comprehensive naming and material composition. When the Phase Four Parc Paris was on sale, the exhibition model marked and named every function and scenic spot, such as the Versailles plaza, the Baroque colonnade, the Queen's fountain, etc. (Fig 3.2-4) The swimming pool, described as an 'imperial pond of the French royal court', is in the centre and is composed of various materials and objects, the curved colonnade, the round pavilions, the patterned floor, and the huge jardinières, hiding the vents of the car park in the basement. Different plant types, such as coconut trees and palm trees, are planted in a line or in a matrix. Mosaics in white, blue and yellow cover the bottom of the pools. The square tiles in black and



Fig. 3.2-5

white make up the surrounding pool edge. Irregular granite and marble chips cover the curved paths. Rather than representing the 'French palace', a concrete and excessive materiality makes the expression of the 'luxury' tangible. (Fig 3.2-5)

These materialised fantasies of being 'modern', in terms of both their expectation and their actual appearance, are produced by the penetration of the market.⁴¹ It is both the reverse of and a compensation for the impoverishment of everyday life in the Revolutionary period. In the article *New Urban Culture and the Anxiety of Everyday Life in Late-Twentieth-Century China*, Xiaobing Tang had an insight into this transformation. According to him, daily life in the Revolutionary time was impoverished by ideological homogeneity, collective domination and material poverty. The impoverishment was paradoxically sustained by a mass culture, which was rich in political meanings, romantic in form and utopian in vision. By contrast, the new urban culture represents 'a secular existence' through 'an ostentatious display of objects, commodities, and details'. Here the proliferation of objects redefine the meaning of daily life, expresses the spiritual resilience of the individual, and embodies self-transformation. 'Almost directly, this commodity fetishism comes as a rebellion against, or overcompensation for, the utopian life' of the Revolutionary period.⁴² The material constraints of the revolutionary past left hardly any resources for the material richness. And so now objects and products are imported and

⁴¹ The material fantasies of urban culture which appeared in the 1930s Shanghai are not completely new in the history of modern China. Lee, Leo Ou-fan (1999). The 'new' which I identified here is derived from the comparison with the immediate past on the one hand, and the scope of spreading on the other.

⁴² Tang, Xiaobing (2000). pp.273-294.

dedicated to articulating the 'imaginary' in the Chinese 'modern' in both the public space – such as the communal gardens of housing development, and the private domain – such as domestic space.

In brief, the 'European style' is not an issue of style, nor an issue of representation, but an expression of the wish to move away from the immediate past. Contemporary architectural practice is thus in the horns of a professional dilemma. While the 'European style' 'disgraces' the authentic position of professional knowledge, it coincides with the wishes of the masses for the first time in the history of modern Chinese architecture since 1949, and signifies a real rise of architectural practice

3.2.2 Large Scale and Sufficiency

This section will be about another aspect of 'luxury' living – the large scale of this particular development. As indicated by the journalist's remark, the 'large scale' is not a merely physical description, but relates to the provision of services and the conveniences of daily life. This section attempts to uncover the normal form of urban habitation concealed underneath the promotion of 'uniqueness' by situating the issue of scale in its institutional basis – the '*Planning Code for Urban Residential Area*'.

In spatial terms, Huangpu Garden acts as a physical and psychological fortress for the residents: for the sake of security



Fig. 3.2-6

and safety, Huangpu Garden is physically enclosed. (Fig. 3.2-6) The whole development consists of four residential and two service blocks. Each of their perimeters is respectively marked by green fences that are over two metres high. All entrances are guarded. These security facilities not only separate the inside and the outside, but protect the privacy of the inside from the sight of passers by. Above the passing city roads, there is a round pedestrian bridge which accesses each block and links the development as a whole.⁴³ Strangers, traffic and criminal threats are kept away.

Within the fortress, the Huangpu Garden contains extensive facilities for residents' daily needs and activities, such as education, social intercourse, leisure and entertainment. The Clubhouse, which is 'big' and 'unique', forges a symbolic and operational centre of the development. The Clubhouse is a three-storey complex occupying an individual block in the centre of Huangpu Garden. Its appearance represents a typical 'European style', which is composed of a range of imported architectural components, such as the Greek Caryatid, the Roman Corinthian capital and a glass curtain wall. Such fussy ornaments make the Clubhouse visually conspicuous amidst the repetitive high-rise living buildings. (Fig. 3.2-7) Its internal programme shows its central position in daily activities. Except for nursery and education facilities, the Clubhouse provides for all other communal and commercial uses – a supermarket and post office, leisure amenities – a gymnasium, swimming pool



Fig. 3.2-7

⁴³ Shenzhen, Urban Planning and Land Resource Bureau (2003). pp. 41 - 48.

and playroom, and spaces for children after school – the children's library, reading room and music room. At the same time, the Clubhouse also forms the administrative heart of the development, by housing the Property Management Company and the House Owners' Committee, both of which are in charge of maintaining and supervising the whole property.⁴⁴ The centre-periphery spatiality and self-sufficient arrangement enable the Huangpu Garden to operate as an organisational unit of the city, spatially, functionally and administratively.

This kind of physically enclosed and self-sufficient arrangement is not at all exceptional in the real estate market of China. They can be found in different types of residential area, – commercial housing, public housing and villa. The Meilinyicun Village on the outskirts of Shenzhen is a public housing development invested in by the Municipal Government in the late 1990s. Occupying 384,000 square metres land and accommodating 6,840 households, the Meilinyicun is one of the biggest public housing projects in the city. Although possessing a different ownership from the Huangpu Garden, the Meilinyicun has similar spatial arrangement – fenced and guarded compound and centred public services, and contains scaled-up facilities, including three kindergartens, one primary school, two secondary schools, one market building, one service centre, one residents' centre and various sporting plots. That is to say, no matter where housing

⁴⁴ *The Ordinance of Property Management* issued by the State Council in 2003 empowers house owners' committee and property management company to take charge of administrating and managing the whole development. It prescribes, 'property management means the actions that house owners take to repair, preserve and manage the buildings, the service facilities and the related spaces, and to maintain sanitation and orders within the territory, through selecting and hiring a property management company, and according to the contract between the house owners and the property management company.'

developments are located and what types of ownership are in phase, they share the same functional and spatial arrangement.

The convenience, self-sufficiency and safety of the residential area derive from the national *Planning Code for Residential Area* (GB 50180-93), and are specified by the local planning bureau. According to the Planning Code, the Huangpu Garden is a micro residential district which should be enclosed by district roads or natural landscape, and equipped with a set of public services meeting the basic needs and requirements of the material and cultural lives of the 7,000 – 15,000 residents.⁴⁵

Safety is established by the principle that the basic daily activities of the residents in a micro residential district should not have to cross the main traffic lines of the city. The demand of the Statutory Plan of SZCD guarantees the sufficiency of services by detailing ten compulsory services – multi-functional market, post office, clinic, primary and secondary schools, kindergarten, cultural activities station, elderly people activities station, sports ground, and trash collection station, and their required sizes. In other words, the spatial and functional disposition of the housing development is in the first place configured institutionally.

The scale of population is the basis on which the organisation of urban living is systematised. Based upon this, the *Planning Code for Residential Area* divides residential areas into three tiers: residential district, micro residential district and residential

⁴⁵ The translation is quoted from: Lin, Lin (2001).

cluster. (Table 3-3) The land use of each tier and the corresponding infrastructure and services are allocated on that basis. For instance, the Planning Code prescribes that, in a big city, the land area for a multi-storey micro residential district is set at 15-19 square metres per capita, and for a high-rise one is at 10-12 square metres per capita.⁴⁶ The stipulation for educational sector(s) in a micro residential district is a 600-1,200 square metre floor area and a 1,000-2,400 square metre land area per thousand people. Moreover, the scale of population in the planning system coincides with the administrative structure of a city. (Table 3-4) Instead of being a unique characteristic of 'luxury', scale is a planning tool to normalise the distribution of natural and social resources, and the relationship between the material distribution, the needs of urban inhabitation and the governance of a city.

Table 3-3 Residential district hierarchical control

	Residential district	Micro residential district	The neighbourhood cluster
Households	10,000 – 15,000	2,000 – 4,000	300 – 700
Residents	30,000 – 50,000	7,000 – 15,000	1,000 – 3,000

Source: (*The National Planning Code for Residential Area (GB50180-93)* 1993)

Table 3-4 Relationship between administrative structure and planning structure

Administrative system	Street office	Residents' council
Correspondent planning structure	Micro residential district	Residential cluster
Inhabiting population	8,000 – 15,000	1,500 – 3,000

Source: (Wang, Qi 1984: 175)

⁴⁶ The Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China (1993). pp.4.

In practice, the scale of a residential area is not only a matter of constructing internal sufficiency, but is also a management technique for the government to balance the needs of the city, the public interest, and market forces. The economic reform which results in the increase of market forces has a dual effect upon city construction and the production of housing. On the one hand, planning gains more power to deploy and manage the city as a whole⁴⁷; on the other hand, profit hungry developers challenge and threaten unified deployment, since government no longer possesses dominance over the real estate market. The scale of the residential area becomes an important means to mediate the division of land size, the disposition of land use, the investment capacity of the developer, and the equivalent construction of living units and public services. The Jingtian Residential Area of Shenzhen is a micro residential district which accommodates more than 6,000 households, and was subsequently built up through the 1990s. The land was divided up for different uses, for example public and commercial services, education and living. The profitable residential clusters and blocks were respectively exploited by eleven developers and were inhabited. However, until 2005, the low-profit land merely used for the services of the whole district, such as parking, retail shops, cultural activities and sports, was still under development. (Fig. 3.2-8) The causes are manifold. For planning strategy, the question is how to manage a reasonable



Fig. 3.2-8

⁴⁷ Urban planning was abandoned in China from the 1960s to 1970s. In 1980, the *Provisional Regulation of Preparing Urban Plan* and the *Provisional Standards of Urban Planning* were issued. In 1984, the *Regulation of Urban Planning* was announced. In 1986, the *Land Administration Act* was launched. In 1989, the *City Planning Act* set up a comprehensive urban planning system by law for the first time in China. Yeh, Anthony Gar-On and Wu, Fulong (1998). pp.175-176.

land size in order to achieve construction equivalence throughout the market?⁴⁸

The construction of Huangpu Garden provides a certain solution. While the developer has more space to organise the facilities and adjust them to the needs of the market, the housing units and supplementary services were completed at the same pace. The kindergarten began to take children in March 2001, one month before the house owners of the Phase One could move into their apartments. The Clubhouse was built in 1999, when the Phase One was under construction, and was initially used to sell property and as a marketing showcase. In 2003, before the Phase Four was presold, it had been turned over for its proper use. A balanced and simultaneous construction have three advantages. Firstly, they uphold the property's value by meeting the needs of the buyers. Secondly, they reduce the burdens on government by building and maintaining public facilities.⁴⁹ Thirdly, meanwhile, the developer and management company benefited from selling, running and charging for the service facilities, and the residents received living support.

Certain disadvantages also exist. In academic circles, the enclosure of residential areas which thereby causes a discontinuity of urban space and cityscape is often criticised.

⁴⁸ Scale of residential area as a coordinating tool in practising housing planning was initially brought up in my conversation with Zhang Shu, an urban planner of the Shenzhen Urban Planning and Design Institute, on 23 September 2002.

⁴⁹ The Shenzhen Huangpu School is a public school run and managed by the Education Bureau of Shenzhen's Futian District. The developer undertook the construction work, and the Property Management Company of Huangpu Garden took charge of maintaining the buildings, schoolyards and facilities. The Education Bureau and the school were saved the trouble of dealing with additional matters.

Zhong Botao's points are typical. In his article *Research on Enclosed Residential Area*, he summarises three 'negative effects upon the overall quality of the city', – the segregation of urban space, traffic jams and a lack of security on the streets. Interestingly, the result of his survey seems to contradict his assumptions. Among the 178 questionnaires, 64% participants prefer enclosed property management, 88.7% think the enclosed compound safer, and 87% regard enclosure helpful to form a traffic free and quieter environment.⁵⁰ The figures show us that the spatial arrangements and management of the micro residential district have actually been the way to which most urban residents are accustomed, the way through which they comprehend their living conditions, and the way they meet their needs and wishes.

Another critique has recently been raised concerning the confusing relationship between housing types, life styles and location in a city. Huang Weiwen, an urban planner from the Planning Bureau of Shenzhen, has commented:

What is problematic now in Chinese cities is the confusion of housing types. In traditional China, different cities had developed different types of house, such as four-sided courtyard house (*siheyuan*) in Beijing, lined terrace house (*linong*) in Shanghai, etc. Cities across the world have developed different traditions of house types, such as apartment buildings, townhouses, villas, etc. They correspond to different locations, cultures and life styles in the city. But China does not have these now. Since 1949, China has lost its house types in the city. Citizens lived in dormitory-like housing which cannot be regarded as urban dwelling. This loss results in a confusion of different house types and their coincident locations. Planners, developers and residents have no clear clue to the differentiations. For instance, some townhouse developments are

⁵⁰ Zhong Botao is a lecturer of the Architectural Faculty of Shenzhen University. In 2003, he did a survey of two micro residential districts in Shenzhen, Baishida Garden and Weilanhai'an. Zhong, Botao (2003).

built up in the heart of a city. This contradicts high density of Chinese cities, particularly in the central areas. Likewise, people want to live in large and enclosed housing developments which are suburban, in the city centre.⁵¹

This confusion can be partly blamed on the swift growth of Chinese cities which has not had enough time to cultivate an urban or living culture. Nevertheless, the unification of the regulated form of urban inhabitation should not be ignored. According to Huang, the current form of urban inhabitation stems from a 'tradition', which can be traced back to the 1950s, just after socialist China was founded. To understand this formation and transition of contemporary housing planning and organisation, and to understand its principles, one needs to look back into the history of housing planning in modern China.

Like most architectural knowledge in China, the basic constitution of the housing planning code started with importation and proceeded by incorporation and modification. In the early years of socialist China, the housing developments, such as the Caoyang Worker Village in Shanghai in 1951, took the model of American 'neighbourhood unit'. Soon after, when the First Five-Year Plan was launched in 1953, the 'neighbourhood model' was abandoned and was criticised as 'capitalist', just as Constructivism and modernism were attacked at the time. The Soviet form of *mikrorayon*, literally translated as

⁵¹ Interview with Huang Weiwen by Hua Li, 9 January 2006. “当前中国城市的问题是住宅类型的混乱。在传统的中国，每个城市发展出了不同的住宅类型，如北京的四合院，上海的里弄等等。世界上有传统的城市都有自己不同的住宅类型，像公寓住宅、联排式住宅、别墅等等，与城市不同的地点和生活方式相符合。但我们现在没有。自从 1949 年以后，我们失去了一个城市的住宅类型和生活方式。我们住在像宿舍一样的住宅里，那不是城市的居住。这种丧失造成了不同住宅类型和它们所应该在的地点的混乱。规划师、发展商和住户搞不清它们之间的区别。例如，有些联排式的住宅区建在了城市的中心。这根本就是与中国城市，特别是中心区的高密度相矛盾。同样地，人们希望住在市中心大的、封闭式的小区里，那本来式应该在郊区的。”

micro-district (*xiaoqu*), was introduced into China and provided the initial form of a housing planning system in China.⁵² While Soviet models and standards were put into practice, their unsuitability to Chinese reality was gradually exposed, questioned and modified, mainly as a result of unrealistic design standards, uneconomical construction methods, and incompatible living patterns.⁵³ In the late 1950s, the breakdown in Sino-Russian relationship ended this importation, at least at the level of state politics. Meanwhile, two types of urban inhabitation, the arrangement of which centred on efficient production and were based upon collective living, were developed in China, – the micro residential district and the work unit (*danwei*).⁵⁴ Before the 1970s, purely residential areas were not adequately constructed. Instead, the socialist urban form, the work unit, which combined working and living together in one spatial unit, spread over the newly built urban areas and the renewed old parts.⁵⁵ Since the Reform policy tended to disentangle working and living in the 1980s, the work unit has been gradually eclipsed, and the system of housing planning makes further progress. In 1993, this system was institutionalised by the *National Planning Code for Residential*

⁵² Micro-district (*xiaoqu*) (小区). Anthony Gar-On Yeh and Wu Fulong suggested that the best translation of the Soviet *mikrorayon* is a ‘planned neighbourhood unit’, which indicates the origin of the principle and the transformation. However, in considering the different contexts for the concepts as well as the literal use, I retain the term ‘neighbourhood unit’ in referring to the American system, the term of ‘*mikrorayon*’ in regard to the Soviet planning system, and the term of ‘micro residential district’ as the translated concept for the Chinese housing planning.

⁵³ Zhang, Ji and Wang, Tao (2001).

⁵⁴ Work unit (*danwei*) (单位). The system of work unit or *danwei* has been extensively researched. Lü, Xiaobo and Perry, Elizabeth J. (1997). Dutton, Michael (1998). Bray, David (2005). Lu, Duanfang (2006). Some scholars suggest using *danwei* instead of work unit to indicate the particular form of organisation in urban China. Bian, Morris L. (2005).

⁵⁵ ‘By 1978, around 95 percent of urban workers belonged to a work unit of one kind or another.’ Lu, Duanfang (2006). pp. 47.

Areas.⁵⁶

In the planning terminology of the Soviet Union, the *mikrorayon* is the basic unit of urban living and of the socialist city. The concept of the *mikrorayon* was derived from communist ideology, introduced before the Second World War and revitalised in the 1950s. The spatial format promotes the value of communal living and the self-contained community. The buildings are normally arranged around the perimeter, while the communal services catering for the daily needs of shopping, recreation, medical and childcare and education facilities, are located in the centre. The size of a *mikrorayon* is defined by a 150- 200 metres service radius. To achieve efficiency by cutting down travel between living and working spaces, each *mikrorayon* is theoretically arranged around an enterprise for which its residents work. In terms of the planning structure, a group of *mikrorayons*, each of which accommodates 10,000 to 12,000 persons, compose the second layer *zhiloy rayon* (residential district) with a population of 30,000 to 50,000, and a wider serviced area within a radius of 1,000-1,200 metres. Analogically, the hierarchical system can generate up to a *gorodskaya zona* (urban zone) serving 800,000 to 1,000,000 people. The levels of the provision of the allotted services are determined by the frequency of their use.⁵⁷ *Mikrorayon* acts as a prototype in a rationalised system which manages the working of the city as a whole.

⁵⁶ *The Planning Code for Residential Area* began to be compiled in 1987, and was promulgated in 1993. During the time in between, the contents of the Planning Code were practiced and were taught in architectural schools.

⁵⁷ French, R.A. and Hamilton, F.E. Ian (1979).

The idea of *mikrorayon* was imported during the establishment of industrial cities in the early 1950s. But because it did not fit the situation in China, its particular spatial format, living standard and hierarchical planning were adjusted or discarded. But the fundamental principles of efficiency encapsulated in the self-contained arrangement and collective basis of the developments, were further developed. The work unit, a unique arrangement of the Chinese, was the climax of developments in this sphere after the Revolution. The work unit integrates production, administration and the distribution of social resources. Its initial objective was to meet the demand for rapid industrial development at a minimal cost. A work unit, in spatial terms, is a walled compound which combines the spaces for working, living, basic services and collective activities. (Fig. 3.2-9) The physical proximity of the sectors, normally within walking distance, minimises daily travelling, provides convenience, and attempts to ensure the greatest capacity of labour mobilisation. At a city level, insofar as the work unit is a self-sufficient organisation, it allows for both the expansion of a city and the concentration of investment on production,⁵⁸ since the establishment of factories takes place prior to the construction of municipal transportation.

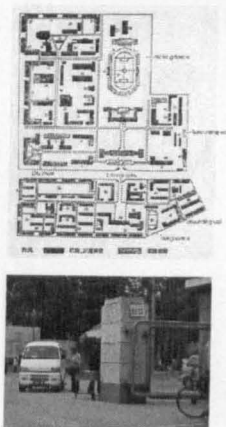


Fig. 3.2-9

Like the *mikrorayon*, the work unit contained extensive facilities to meet daily needs and socio-cultural activities. The facilities of

⁵⁸ The work unit where I once lived for about fifteen years was built on the outskirts of the old city in 1956. As a newly urbanised area at the time, Xi'an's Yanta District where the work unit located was occupied by different work units side by side. Till 1960, there was no public transportation to connect the locational area of the work unit to the other part of the city. In the mid-1980s, when the population of the work unit nearly reached 5,000 people, there was only one bus line running through the area.

the work unit not only supplied services, but also organised workers' spare time through workers' clubs and various activity centres, and to apportion those everyday goods that were rationed to the workers and their families, for example, the 'grain station' and the 'coal station'. In theory, the self-sufficiency of a moderate scale work unit could adequately meet the needs of the production and reproduction of labour forces, from material provision, social care to cultural cultivation.

One characteristic of the work unit that is often referred to is its highly collective life style. Cultural traditions aside, workers' life style largely reflected minimal living conditions, since it encapsulated the dictum 'production first, livelihood second', and the welfare accommodation supplied by the work unit was basic. Most households did not have an individual kitchen and toilet, let alone an individual bathroom, or separate living room and bedroom. (Fig. 3.2-10) As compensation, public baths and communal canteens were necessary supplements in a work unit.

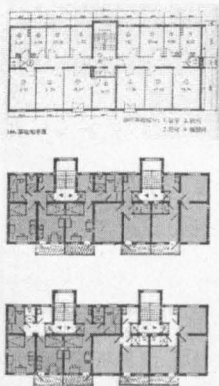


Fig. 3.2-10

Comparing the Soviet *mikrorayon* with the work unit, we can see that they share some similarities in spatiality, objective and ideology. Yet, the actual operation was not the same. In general, the work unit, which binds working and living together, is more self-sufficient and administratively efficient. Although the combination caused a number of problems later, it provided a rough solution to construction lags in public services in the Soviet *mikrorayon*. In regard to the relationship with the city,

mikrorayon is an integrated part of it, connecting to a higher level of organisation. The work unit, on the other hand, retains more independence.⁵⁹

By the early 1980s, after two decades of development, the production-oriented, welfare-based system was in crisis. In terms of living condition in the cities, the welfare system faced two problems: the serious shortage of housing supply,⁶⁰ and the unbalanced and corrupt distribution system organised through the work unit.⁶¹ Till the early 1990s, it became one of the main tasks of the Reform policy to separate the site for production activity from the system of providing living needs and after-work activities.⁶² The work unit has been fading away ever since. Meanwhile, the system of the residential area matured, and became increasingly the general way of accommodating the urban population. Nonetheless, ideas of self-sufficiency and integrated operation, which sustained the work unit, have been inherited and grafted onto the current housing development, as the Huangpu Garden shows.

⁵⁹ Work unit normally has two types of belonging system, national ministry or local government. Both types work units possess their own designated land, and have the authority of doing master plan and construction within their territories. Though varied city by city, in general, the planning and construction within a work unit did not need to get planning permission of the local government. The relationship between different work units in a city is in horizontal parallel rather than vertical hierarchy, no matter how big or small they are. In this sense, work unit is more independent than the Soviet *mikrorayon*.

⁶⁰ In 1978, two years after the Cultural Revolution, living space per capita in urban areas was 3.6 square metres across the whole country. In Beijing, it was 3.67 square metres, in Shanghai, 4.5 square metres, and in Tianjin, 3.53 square metres. During thirty years from 1949 to 1978, the total constructed area of housing was 530,000,000 square metres in China. The statistic of the constructed housing area in thirty years was less than that in each year from 1996 to 2001. From 1996 to 2001, the total constructed housing area was about 3,825,000,000 square metres, and 638,000,000 square metres every year. See: Lin, Xi'en and Yang, Jiemei (1982). Zhong, Botao (2003).

⁶¹ Lin and Yang have summarised the management problems for housing shortage in 1982. One of them was 'the low rent housing system cannot function as an economic restriction, and goes against the rational distribution of housing.' They have exemplified it by a case in a factory of Tianjin. The workers only got 18 units out of 108. The others were occupied either by the leaders of the factory or by the persons from the 'related parties' (*guanxihu*). Lin, Xi'en and Yang, Jiemei (1982).

⁶² Zhu, Huaxin (1993). The English version of the article see: Dutton, Michael (1998). pp.215-219.

Some scholars compare the micro residential district in China to the gated community in the USA, because of similarities in respect to physical enclosure, security equipment and social segregation. However, the glaring difference between them is their organisational basis. To make this point, let me quote Setha Low's definition of a 'gated community'.

A gated community is a residential development surrounded by walls, fences, or earth banks covered with bushes and shrubs, with a secured entrance. In some cases, protection is provided by inaccessible land such as nature reserve and, in a few cases, by a guarded bridge. The houses, streets, sidewalks, and other amenities are physically enclosed by these barriers, and entrance gates are operated by a guard or opened with a key or electronic identity card. Inside the development there is often a neighborhood watch organization or professional security personnel who patrol on foot or by automobile.

Gated communities restrict access not just to residents' homes, but also to the use of public spaces and services – roads, parks, facilities, and open space – contained within the enclosure. Communities vary in size from a few homes in very wealthy areas to as many as 21,000 homes in Leisure World in Orange County, California – with the number of residents indexed to the level of amenities and services. Many include golf courses, tennis courts, fitness centers, swimming pools, lakes, or unspoiled landscape as part of their appeal; commercial and public facilities are rare.⁶³

Given the first part of the definition, one might find similarities between the gated community and the micro residential district. But in the second part, the differences emerge – in terms of the concept of public space, size and facilities. In contrast to the micro residential district, the gated community is established on the basis of a social group, such as race, class, etc.⁶⁴ The American gated community is dominated by its separation from the outside world and its threats. It does not itself possess a

⁶³ Low, Setha (2003). pp. 12.

⁶⁴ Blakely, Edward J. and Snyder, Mary Gail (1997).

distinctive character, and there is nothing of tradition in its communal organisation. It is an attempt to make private property even more private. It attempts to have as little relation as possible to national or local government. If anything it seeks to be an enclave, which is separated as far as possible from the ills of government.

By contrast, the micro residential district is well planned and regulated. The differences between the gated community and the micro residential district shows that the housing development, whether 'luxury' or not, is a normal organisation meeting the management of a city. At this point, the kind of architectural knowledge – the form of housing arrangement, the distribution of spatial types and the technique of scale – is shaped by and corresponds to such requirement of management.

3.2.3 'Home as a Hotel'

In the previous two sections, we have discussed two features of 'luxury' living, the 'European style' and the large-scale residential development, in the cultural context of architecture and in terms of the institutional basis of urban living. As the two features deal more with the form of modern living in contemporary Chinese cities, one question arises. How is 'domesticity' conceived during this period of commercialisation? This in turn leads to other questions. For example, how is this 'domesticity' identified or referred to? How does the image of 'domesticity' work or how is it used in the market? How is its

image constructed? How does this image influence architecture? To approach these questions, this section will look at the issue of 'the home as a hotel' in the marketing of commercial housing, that is, the way in which the 'luxury' living is displayed by reference to the standard of the 'hotel', and the context in which the 'hotel' itself stands for fantasies of 'luxury' and the 'coming life'.

To say 'the home as a hotel' does not mean to take the home as a hotel, but rather to show how, in this sphere, the 'future' is projected. To create the projection of a 'new' life style in the future and to propose a living space for it have been an obsession of architects since 'modernism', for instance, Le Corbusier's Mass-production House in 1921, Alison and Peter Smithsons' The House of the Future in 1956, Michael Webb's Cushicle in 1966, etc. However, in the real estate market of China, the imaginary 'luxury life' is not concerned to provide an innovative vision. A paradox embedded in this commercial 'display' is that, on the one hand, the image of the 'future home' requires being somewhat distant from the current situation, yet on the other hand, should be sufficiently 'real' to seem attainable. Instead of trying to break with the past, the image of the 'future home' in the market always refers analogically to existing objects. The Hotel is just such an object for housing properties in the marketing strategy.

In 1999, an advertising slogan – '*Biguiyuan*, give you a five-star home' – burst onto the media in Guangdong Province. It soon

became a badge of residential development, and has now become the icon of the real estate company which had formulated the slogan. The success of the *Biguiyuan* in the property market, selling 3,000 units in the first two months, underlined the success.⁶⁵ Although the marketing figures cannot be due solely to a striking phrase, the acknowledgement of the analogy between the two spatial types – the starred hotel and the home – is still remarkable.⁶⁶ The work of the analogy indicates that the hotel has been standing as a reference of and standard for the quality of life, consciously or unconsciously, for some time.

First of all, we need to look at what the reference of the hotel means to the quality of life. In the market, the quality of life is largely identified with services. The developer of Guangzhou Biguiyuan claims:

Undertaking the concept and service principle of 'giving you a five-star home', the Biguiyuan provides complete managing services for more than 5,000 householders, such as public security, public cleanliness and sanitation, customised domestic service, etc., and looks after the domestic life of every householder.⁶⁷

This claim reflects the fact that commercial development has taken over services which previously relied upon welfare distribution. The marketing promotion of 'giving you a five-star home' marks the changed relationship between suppliers and the consumers in the Reform period.

⁶⁵ Because of the success of Guangzhou Biguiyuan in the market, it was awarded one of the 1998-1999 Top Ten Star Property of Guangzhou in 2000, and 1999 Exemplary Taxpayers of Guangdong Province in the same year.

⁶⁶ The selling strategy of the Guangzhou Biguiyuan was 'good provisions cheap price'. Compared with the other developments around, its average price was 1,000 yuan per square metre cheaper.

⁶⁷ The quotation is from the official website of the developer, <http://www.bgy.com.cn/LouPan/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=17>, access date: 21/21/2005.

This commercial relation inevitably leads to a communication problem between the two parties. Inasmuch as most of housing properties are sold in advance and will stand for seventy years – the lifetime investment of most buyers – to the consumers, the question is how the purchase of this ‘future’ and the claims of the developers can be verified, particularly at the stage of pre-selling. On the other hand, for developers, the question is how the properties can convince and persuade buyers. Apart from the developers’ reputation, the construction of ‘show apartments’ becomes a key device to communicate the two parties in marketing strategy.

The idea of ‘show apartments’ is not to show the reality of using the space, but to display the quality of the ‘coming life’ in the future to potential buyers. This ‘coming life’ is often depicted in terms of the ‘luxury’ of the ‘hotel’. In the case of the Huangpu Garden, when the Phase Four was pre-sold, six show apartments in different styles were built in actual dimensions.⁶⁸ Among them, a ‘European style’ flat (*oulu huating*) on the 24th floor was selected by the visitors as ‘the most favoured household type’, due to the wide field of view, reasonable layout and great orientation.⁶⁹ (Fig. 3.2-11) However, the developer intended to do more than just describe the physical qualities:

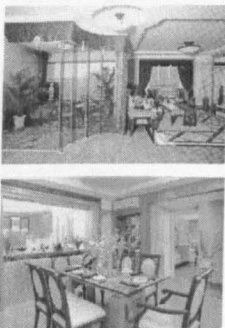


Fig. 3.2-11

To many people, the luxurious European style is an ideal design for their houses. Not only does it show the gloriousness of the

⁶⁸ All the show apartments were sold with furniture, equipment and decorations which put extra cost on top of the normal price. On the one hand, the developer got back the investment. On the other hand, the buyers were saved the trouble of furnishing the apartments by themselves.

⁶⁹ Zhang, Lei (2003). ‘European style’ flat (*oulu huating*) (欧陆华庭)

householders, but also exhibits delicate and attractive details. There is an exterior sky garden separated by glazed walls. Acting as an interior atrium, the garden makes the unit more splendid. Within it, the fountain and the plants create an atmosphere of nature for a leisure space, and complement the artificial magnificence of the interior.⁷⁰

The terms ‘gloriousness’, ‘splendid’ and ‘magnificence’ are not how domesticity is normally defined. That is usually in terms of intimacy, comfort and cosiness. By contrast, the developers try to create a sort of spectacle which is distant from daily life.

The distance from daily life which the ‘European style’ show apartment displayed is underlined by a theatrical quasi-hotel setting. The show unit is a typical three-bedroom flat.⁷¹ The layout, which consists of three bedrooms, two bathrooms and one tiny study, is in itself neither exceptional nor lavish in the current housing market. What makes the unit unusual is the fussy employment of materials, ornaments, furniture, and equipment rarely used by Chinese families. The living space is the centre of the unit. By combining the living room with the dining room, the space looks more imposing. A dark red curtain which hangs along the outside walls from top to bottom forms a background to the interior space. The floor is in pink marble with a rectangular pattern in the middle. Around a ‘European style’ tea table often seen in hotels, a pair of armchairs in a sort of ‘Baroque’ style and with golden curved ornaments is set against

⁷⁰ “华丽的欧陆格调，是很多人的理想家居设计，它不但显示了屋主的气派，置身其中，也会被各部分精致的细节吸引，客厅的落地玻璃间格外有一空中花园，感觉有如一个室内的中庭花园，使单位更显气派。花园内设计了流水池及放置了各样的植物，为居庭提供了一个充满自然气息的休闲空间，平衡了室内的人工华丽。”

⁷¹ The architectural layout is a four-bedroom flat. One small bedroom next to the living room was removed in order to make the family space larger. The same modification to the architectural layout can find in the households which will be represented in the Section 4.6 of this chapter. In this regard, the show unit seemingly shares similarities with the users.

the window. A modern sofa upholstered in white and with a row of cushions faces a LCD-screen television. A bowl of fruit and several popular local magazines are on the tea table. A quite formal bar area, which has a bar counter and a liquid cabinet, which is hardly ever found in a normal Chinese home, occupies a corner of the living room. Two bar stools made of plastic and stainless steel stand in front of the counter. A bottle of wine and a glass are found on the counter. In the dining area, the dining table is laid in a restaurant manner. In the sky garden, a miniature Manneken Pis on a marble-made fountain faces the living room. The whole setting appears like a hotel lounge rather than a domestic living room.

This hotel-like setting mixes the familiar and the unfamiliar. The layout and basic function of the domestic spaces are normal, whereas the references to remote 'places' detach this from that recognisability. The paradox of the setting is that, while the installation tries to be distant from reality, the whole arrangement tries to fabricate a 'real' life by showing that the equipment is in use or is ready to be used. The substantial details strengthen this paradoxical feeling – nearly 'real'. This kind of fantasised setting does not propose a new way of living, but shows an upgraded 'coming life' that the developer is able to sustain.

The 'setting in the coming future' is an intentional marketing device, and the experience of visiting the show apartments should be included. In 2003, I visited the show apartments with a potential buyer who finally purchased a flat in the Huangpu

Garden. Because Phase Four was still under construction, a special path was paved, leading to a fully decorated elevator, the lift lobby and the apartments. Security guards in uniform with walkie-talkies greeted visitors at every turning point. Although still within the dusty and noisy construction site, all the surfaces of the apartments were kept clean and polished. The volume of background music was moderate without drowning out the construction noise. The clean and ordered environment was managed as a contrast to the building site and itself demonstrated the management capacity of the developer. The attention of the management to details, in the show apartments, in maintaining the level of tidiness, and in the itinerary, showed itself as a quality of service by the potential provider of care and respect. A buyer of Huangpu Garden once commented:

We find that what makes big developers extraordinary is not their financial strength, but more importantly, attention to details.⁷²

The comment hints at the way in which the show apartments worked and the way in which the potential buyers judged the property and hence the developer. The issue of the financial strength of the developer remains very abstract to potential buyers, while the show apartments are concrete and tangible. They can be perceived and recognised immediately by the buyers. In addition, it shows a kind of attention to the users' life in the development. The show units' effect acts as a communication medium between selling and buying, and between the developer and the buyers. In a broad sense, we can see that the products of architecture play a mediating role in

⁷² Huangpu Garden: Life Starting from Here (2002).

commercial exchange.

Now we come to the question how the 'hotel' could stand for 'luxury' living – the fantasy of the 'coming life' of the future. The question is raised not because of the manipulation of the marketing strategy, but the acknowledgement of the masses. First of all, one has to realise that the hotel acts as a metaphor of 'luxury' not only for housing or the home, but as a general image of the 'better life'. In the history of modern China, the hotel has signified the role of the 'foreign' – mainly regarded as synonymous with the 'western' – in Chinese society, in contrast to Chinese daily life. The 'foreign' often becomes a projection of the desire of the Chinese.

This formation of social and cultural associations can be traced back to the late nineteenth century. As with a number of other architectural types in modern China, the hotel was a new institutional space which began with importation. It was first built up by and served foreigners in China, mostly Europeans and Americans. By contrast, the traditional Chinese guest house, similar to the inn in Europe, was a family-based small scale business for the accommodation of travellers. It normally takes the form of a house, provides for eating and drinking, and is run by the family who live in the house. The modern type of hotel has nothing to do with the traditional Chinese guest house in origin or form of organisation.

The distance of the hotel from Chinese society forged its



Fig. 3.2-12

'foreign' image in China, and by the 1920s, the image of the 'foreign' itself had shifted from being something alien to being associated with 'luxury'. Sassoon House with its Cathay Hotel was the acme of the 'foreign' and 'luxury' in China in the first half of the twentieth century. (Fig. 3.2-12) The landmark building was invested in by an Anglo-Jewish businessman Victor Sassoon who was the biggest developer in Shanghai at the time. When it was built up on Shanghai's Bund in 1929, it was the tallest building in the city, and was regarded as the 'first building of the Far East'. Its conspicuous appearance was Art Deco, the fashionable style of the time. The Cathay Hotel which occupied the fifth to the seventh stories was one of the most luxurious hotels in the city. Its guest rooms were well known for employing nine exotic styles. Sassoon's own house was sited on the top floor of the building. The association with the fame of the owner, the conspicuous appearance of the building, its leading position in architectural fashion, and decorative interiors forged the luxurious image of the hotel.

One reason why the hotel largely retained the image of 'luxury' was because of by its unattainable nature to most Chinese. They 'largely catered to the rich and famous, mostly foreigners.'⁷³ A local writer from Shanghai, Wang Dingjiu wrote in 1932:

These places have no deep relationship to us Chinese ... and besides, the upper-class atmosphere in these Western hotels is very solemn; every move and gesture seems completely regulated. So if you don't know Western etiquette, even if you have enough money to make a fool of yourself it's not worthwhile.⁷⁴

⁷³ Lee, Leo Ou-fan (1999). pp.13.

⁷⁴ Wang Dingjiu (1932) *Keys to Shanghai*, Shanghai: Zhongyang Press, pp.11-12. The quotation was from: Ibid.

Wang's advice contains two meanings. Firstly, the 'luxury' of the hotel is less a matter of expense than a form of behaviour and manner. Secondly, as the manner exhibited in the hotel is far removed from the Chinese custom, the hotel is a foreign and unsuitable place for the Chinese. Thus, from the Chinese point of view, the real significance of the hotel is not its function to accommodate travellers, but rather relates to its social status as 'upper-class'.

The 'foreignness' of the hotel was intensified after the revolution. The detachment of the hotel from Chinese daily life was now regulated. From the 1950s to the 1980s, accommodation for travellers was divided into two types according to the nationality of the guests, Chinese citizens and foreigners (including overseas Chinese). The former type was called the hostel (*zhaoaisuo*), and later the hotel (*binguan*) or foreign-related hotel (*shewai binguan*). Except for those who were privileged, Chinese citizens were not allowed to stay in hotels, and vice versa.⁷⁵ This inaccessibility of the hotel remained until 1985 when a five-star hotel in Guangzhou, the White Swan Hotel, first opened to the public.⁷⁶ This regulation set the hotel outside Chinese life for some thirty years. The 'foreignness' of the hotel was no longer just associated with different behaviour, but was a legal fact. Within Chinese society, it embodied an institutionalised social hierarchy which neither addressed

⁷⁵ From the 1950s to the 1980s, the administrative definitions of the hotel and the hostel were very different from now. Due to the control of people's mobility, Chinese citizens staying in a hostel or hotel normally needed a reference letter from their work units.

⁷⁶ In terms of national administrative regulation, the differentiation of hotel types for foreigners and Chinese was formally retained till 2002.

individual taste nor the function of the hotel itself.

Apart from the 'foreignness' of the hotel, the facilities, equipment and service, standards of the hotel were in contrast to the ordinary life of the Chinese. Qi Kang once commented on the difference:

Are there any differences between the tourist hotel and the normal hostel? I think we should admit that there are. [...] In our country, people's living standard is low, and hence the standard of architecture and equipment is low. To host domestic and overseas travellers has to be 'different between the insiders and the outsiders' (*neiwai youbie*). In consequence, it results in two types – the social hostel and the tourist hotel. I assume that the differences caused by the different [living] standards will exist for quite a long time. Therefore, hotel for tourist cannot be taken into the same category of social hostel.⁷⁷

The physical standards between hotels for foreigners and hostels for Chinese were dramatically different at that time. While spaces and facilities of the hotels referred to international standards, the hostels' were basic. The following list shows the average standard for hostels in Beijing in 1977:

Majority of guest room types: 3, 4, 5 beds / room;
Average accommodation area: 4 square metres / bed;
Washing tap: 1 water faucet / 8-10 beds;
Squatting lavatory: 1 lavatory for man / 16 beds; 1 lavatory for woman / 13 beds;
Urinal: 1 urinal / 16 beds;
Shower: 1 shower for man / 30 beds; 1 shower for woman / 20 beds;
Meeting space: 0.08-0.10 square metres / bed.⁷⁸

This standard corresponded to the average living area of the day in Beijing, 3.67 square metres per capita, as mentioned in Section 3.2.2. Hotels were built to a much higher standard. The

⁷⁷ Lin, Leyi, Zhang, Bo, She, Junnan, Mo, Bozhi, Xu, Shangzhi, Huang, Kangyu, Liu, Guanghua, Qi, Kang, Huang, Zhongshu, Luo, Pei, Fang, Jianquan, Tang, Baoheng and Zeng, Jian (1980). pp.1.

⁷⁸ Hotel Research Group, Beijing Architecture and Design Institute (1977).

floor area of the standard guest room of four famous hotels in Beijing, Xinqiao Hotel (1972), Qianmen Hotel (1956), Minzu Hotel (1959) and the West Wing of Beijing Hotel (1954), varied from 27.20 square meters to 32 square metres, including an individual bathroom ranging from 3.10 square metres to 4 square metres. The average accommodation area was 14.7 square metres per bed, more than three times that of the hostel and four times the living area, not to mention equipment and other facilities. When the hotel became more accessible to the public from the late 1980s, the 'luxury' image was less any longer concerned with the identity of foreigners and more with the material provisions – convenience, physical equipment and services.

As in the early twentieth century, the appearance of the hotel also retained a conspicuousness in and contrast to the urban landscape of the Chinese cities of that time. The image of the 'foreign' and the 'distant' was transferred to a 'new' picture of a 'coming future'. Hotels always stood at the forefront of 'new' fashions, and were the first buildings that employed new materials, techniques, styles and foreign architects. The Baiyun Hotel in Guangzhou serving diplomatic purposes was built in 1975. It was the first building to use horizontal strip windows which were then usually seen as a symbol of 'capitalist modernism'. The Beijing Great Wall Sheraton Hotel, which was built in 1983 and designed by the American Peigete International Construction Firm, was the first five-star hotel in China and led to the use of the glass curtain wall in the following

years. The Fragrant Hill Hotel in a suburb of Beijing, designed by I. M. Pei in 1979 and built in 1982, was the first example of 'postmodernism' in China. The employment of elements and symbols from the buildings of his hometown Suzhou, the idea of the Chinese garden and the application of traditional crafts and materials stimulated and influenced the trend of seeking the expression of local culture.⁷⁹ All the features that the hotels first adopted would soon penetrate other types of public buildings, such as office buildings, shopping malls, entertainment complexes, and finally housing. The 'foreignness' of the image of the hotel articulated the Chinese desire for 'a coming future', socially, materially and symbolically. It had little concern with the foreigners or the nature of travel or the international standardisation of hotels. Thus, the migration of styles, materials, facilities and equipment from the hotel to housing provision and domestic space does not seem to have obstacle.

The Hotel developed differently in Europe and the USA. According to the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner, the hotel was gradually separated from the inn – the traditional space for travellers in Europe and later in the USA – over the course of a long history. The transition included an enlarged scale, more public space, service, and better equipment. Meanwhile, the guests which the hotel housed shifted from families to individuals. This shift was basically completed in the early twentieth century. Clearly, the history of the hotel in Europe experienced a process that distanced and differentiated it from a

⁷⁹ See: Fig. 2.1-26, pp. 157. Section 1.2.2, pp. 67-73 and Section 2.1.3, pp. 154-158.

sense of domestic space. The differentiation leads to a different constitution of two types of space. The former is a public and collective based institutionalised service, whilst the latter, on the contrary, is a privately based personalised domain. In social terms, no matter how diverse the forms and the people are, the organisation of the hotel runs on the basis of an abstract relationship. Guests are gathered, distributed, served and treated as indifferent '*Ratio*'. The reduction of individuals to abstract figures means that hotel is an impersonal and standardised institution.⁸⁰

In terms of the hotel standing as an image of 'luxury' living in China, three interrelated aspects are worth highlighting. Firstly, from the historical point of view, the hotel, either in the 1920s, such as Sassoon House in which the hotel and private house coexisted, or in the 1950s, such as the Friendship Hotel, which accommodated Soviet experts and their families in China for a long period of time, fused space 'travellers' with a sense of 'home' – although temporarily. So the two spatial types were not clear-cut. Secondly, at a management level, domesticity, which is based upon communal provision, has been in the tradition, at least since the Revolutionary period, as discussed in Section 3.2.2. In terms of providing necessary services and support for living, the spatial arrangement of the hotel and housing developments shares some similarities. Thirdly, inasmuch as the 'guest' space (hotel, and the 'host' space) and home are not opposed to each other in the Chinese context, the impersonal

⁸⁰ Kracauer, Seigfried (1995). pp.173-184.



Fig. 3.2-13

institution of the hotel is not an obstacle to the arrangement of Chinese domestic life. This togetherness without collective meaning, and the relationship between elements of the hotel, as Kracauer analysed it, are unlikely to affect Chinese daily activities. This point may be illustrated by two cases. During one of my visits of the Huangpu Garden in 2005, I came cross a scene in which a group of residents were practicing the *yangge* dance in the communal garden of the Phase One. *Yangge* was a collective performance which originated from rural Shaanxi and was popularised in the Revolutionary period. (Fig. 3.2-13) The survival of this collective activity in the 'luxury' neighbourhood and in the new market society, either spontaneously or officially organised, suggests a successful combination of collective tradition and the commercial system.

In the beginning of 2006, I visited the householder who bought the 'European Style' show apartment and had moved in three months before. Two brothers' families from Chaozhou, a county of Guangdong Province, shared the property. The main reason for them to buy the show apartment was to save them the trouble of furnishing a house. The settings of the living room, dining room, liquid cabinets and corridor were basically remained the same, while several modifications had made. The bar and the study were used as storage space, the fountain in the sky garden was abandoned, the Manneken Pis was removed, and a lamp of a non-matching style was added to the living room in order to make it brighter. More significantly, a shrine was placed in the garden so that they could pray for

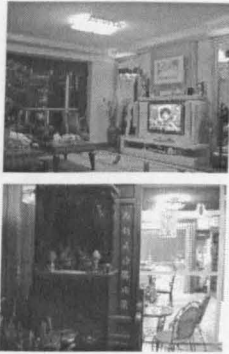


Fig. 3.2-14

blessings and good fortune – a local custom of their town. (Fig. 3.2-14) The householder commented:

The decoration of the flat is nice. But the main problem of it is not practical enough. The fountain may be beautiful but useless. It is even too deep to be used as a fish tank. The study room was too small to be a single bedroom.

The comment exposes the complex relationship between marketing promotion, design and the user's requirements. This complexity often intertwines correspondence and gap between fantasised image, standardised arrangement and specific considerations of life itself. What is interesting is that the modifications, particularly represented by the shrine, undermine the arrangement of the components, whose relation was established upon the basis of abstract architectural knowledge – the 'composition', and turned the fantasised space into personalised, meaningful living space.

In brief, 'home as a hotel' means neither a literal equivalence of the two spatial types in marketing or domestic life. Nor does it mean the imitation of the life style of 'foreigners' or 'westerners' which to some extent the 'hotel' connotes. Instead, the 'foreignness' of the hotel which seems at a distance from everyday life in China is a fantasy and desire of the Chinese for the 'coming life' of the future, socially, materially and symbolically. Taking this fantasy into the market, architectural production acts as a communication between developers'

promises and the consumers' fantasies. The case of the hotel that stands as a concrete reference for the image of domesticity seems to suggest that architecture, in terms of its practical nature, is neither a self-referential knowledge, nor a symbolised application. Architectural practice and production are rather a social practice upheld and demanded by and corresponding to the condition of the modern form of exchange, communication and consumption.

3.2.4 The Operation of the Architect Office

In the preceding sections, I have discussed how the production of 'luxury' living is shaped by and corresponds with the fantasises, the management of the city, and the operation of commercial system, and reach the point that architecture is a social practice that mediates different needs and demands. The question of this section is: how is the work of the architect – architectural practice – appreciated, recognised and valued?

The Huangpu Garden is designed by a private architect office owned by Chen Shimin, who has succeeded in the design market. Chen's professional career reflects the transition of architectural practice from a state-owned organisation to commercialisation and privatisation.⁸¹ Chen Shimin was trained as an architect in the Chongqing Institute of Architecture and Engineering. After graduation in 1954, he was allotted to the Architecture Design Institute of Ministry of Construction in Beijing, one of the major state-owned architectural firms in

⁸¹ The selected work of Chen Shimin and brief introduction of his career in English see: Dobney, Stephen (1998).

China. In 1980 after working there for twenty-six years, Chen was assigned to set up an overseas branch of the institute in Hong Kong, the Huasen Architecture and Engineering Design Consultants, the first China-foreign joint architectural design office in China. In 1986, Chen left Huasen and founded a private-based architectural firm, the Huayi Designing Consultants, which is so far the only one first-class architectural design firm solely sponsored by foreign capital. The two firms are based in Shenzhen, and have become two of the most successful design firms. From 1986 to 2002, Chen was appointed by the Shenzhen Municipal Government as an expert consultant. In 1994, he was awarded the title 'National Design Master' by the Ministry of Construction. In 1996, Chen established his own architectural office in his own name in Shenzhen.

The Huangpu Garden was one of the earliest projects of Chen's own office. Its success in market terms not only brought a promising start to his business, but also initiated a working 'model' that his office employs in the process of construction. The success of running the project in practice has exceeded purely design work – the execution of architect's ideas –, and is largely due to a kind of management which allows the architect to take the leading position in the whole production process, as well as the differentiation of the work of 'architect' from that of 'engineers'.

In many ways, Chen's role in the making of the Huangpu

Garden challenged the purist idea of architectural design, which sees the production process as the implementation of the architect's ideas. In design terms, Chen's major task was not to propose things anew, but to adapt the existing 'model' from Hong Kong to the local market. The idea of 'high-rise, low density' was popular for the housing developments at the outskirts of Hong Kong. Due to the comparable land use condition and the nature of demand in Shenzhen – the large scale of development, the sufficient service supply, and the balance of maximising profitable floor area and distance between living buildings, it was applied to the city centre. In terms of housing price and living convention in Shenzhen, the household types from Hong Kong were scaled up. The layout of apartment building, 'one staircase six or eight units', was changed to 'one staircase four or five units'. Chen recalls the 'modification' and 'localisation' process as such:

Hutchison Whampoa always used the foreign architects. We were the first domestic architectural office working for them. They didn't trust us at the beginning. Indeed, we had some conflicts. The biggest one was the scale of the household types in the city centre. My local knowledge told me that the 'luxury' flat should be big. But they didn't agree. Depending on their experience in Hong Kong and regarding that majority of the buyers would be from Hong Kong, they thought that one hundred square metres unit was big enough. But when the Phase One was first on sale in Shenzhen, a long queue was lined up and people kept asking for the larger types. I got the phone call in the morning of the day from the developer who consulted me to deal with the request. After then, the developer got to appreciate our ideas and local knowledge, and to trust our competence.⁸²

⁸² Because of the success of Huangpu Garden in the market, Chen Shimin gets all the commissions of housing project of the Hutchison Whampoa in China. Interview with Chen Shimin by Hua Li, 31 December 2005. “和记黄埔一直用的都是外国建筑师，我们是第一个给和记黄埔作设计的国内建筑师。开始，他们是不信任我们的。我们有很多的碰撞在这个中间。我们当时与他们最大的分歧点就是在市中心这个地方户型的大小。我们认为要作比较大的、高档的户型，这是我对市场的理解。但他们不这么认为。他觉得他们的消费群体主要是香港的消费群体，对香港的消费群体 100 平米就是豪宅了。结果第一天放盘抽签，市场很火爆，排队买。很多人问有没有大的户型。卖楼的当天早上，项目经理就给我打了电话，问我怎么办。到后来就越来越放心了，就让放手让我们

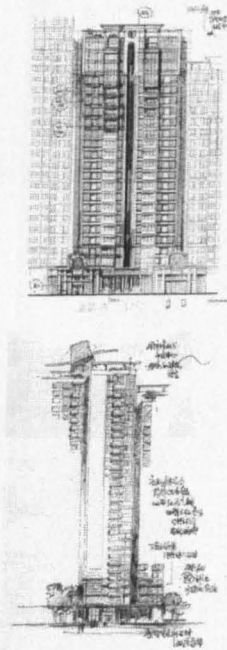


Fig. 3.2-15

Two points can be drawn from this in regard to the status of local architect and architectural design. Firstly, while international investment brings a certain threat of international architectural competition to Chinese domestic architects, the need to mediate the local creates a space for them to play an important role. Secondly, the process is driven by profit rather than ideological motives. In terms of the purpose of commercial project, the economic value is prior to design ideas. Architectural design has to provide marketable solutions rather than execute architectural concepts. In the case of the Huangpu Garden, the façades of the buildings are in two different 'styles'. The first two phases, which were aimed at the buyers from Hong Kong and were designed by a Hong Kongese architect, were concise and straightforward.⁸³ When the marketing strategy turned to local buyers, the last two phases, designed by Chen Shimin, were in decorative 'European style', as was the layout of the development and the household types. (Fig. 3.2-15)

做了，他们还是觉得我们贴近市场。”

The General Manager of the Hutchison Whampoa Property Group, Liang Baoguang, has assured the adjustment. 'In the last several years, we have done a number of adjustments according to the response of the market to the Huangpu Garden. [...] For instance, the household design in the Phase One followed the Hong Kong's mode. All the units were about ninety square metres. When it was put in the 99' Autumn Real Estate Trade Fair [in Shenzhen], the need of the market was rather different from our preceding market investigation. The big units were largely requested. Thus, we made the alternation right away, removing the walls between the two units, merging two two-bedroom flats into one four-bedroom flat'. (“过去几年，根据市场对黄埔雅苑的反应，我们对自身做了不少调整。[...] 举个例子说，黄埔雅苑第一期的户型设计还有许多是比较香港化的，全部是 90 多平米的。99 年秋交会推出来，市场的需求跟我们原来的市场调查有一定差异，大户型的需求量较大。于是，我们马上作出调整，能打通的就把它打通，两房的把它变成一百多平方的单房，100 平方的变成两百多平方，四房单元。”) From the website of Shenzhen Municipal Planning & Land Information Centre, <http://news.szhome.com/UploadFiles/newsfiles/000/014/061/14061.htm>. Ta, Shan (2003).

The situation is also confirmed by my interview with Zhang Su who bought a merged unit in the Phase One in 2000. The interview took place in her flat in March 2005. (Appendix 5)

⁸³ Chen Yixin, the Deputy of the SZCD Planning and Construction Office, confirms from the side that the initial proposal of the facade of Huangpu was not fitted to the local taste, and did not satisfy the local planners. So, several rounds of amendment were asked.

Some foreign architects are amazed by the flexibility of property market in China. Based upon some extreme cases in Shenzhen, Rem Koolhaas deduces,

The beauty of the system is that Chinese architecture is never final, but in permanent conversion. There is no ultimate condition, only mutation from one condition to the other.⁸⁴

Koolhaas's comment may be partly true to the extent that ‘the market economy in whatever form increasingly dictates certain decisions, more and more strictly and inevitably.’⁸⁵ But, what is lacking in his observation is the strict regulation underlying commercial commissions. Constant changes do not mean that design work is haphazard. In the case of the Huangpu Garden, Chen Shimin states:

The demand of the Hutchison Whampoa was rigorous. The deviation of floor area of each household from the planned must be less than 2%. To a one hundred and twenty square metres flats, the deviation should be less than two square metres.⁸⁶ The *plan ratio* was required very high and had very little flexibility.⁸⁷ Only the construction drawings of the Phase One, did I draw three times.⁸⁸

The deviation and the *plan ratio* are crucial factors to measure the economic efficiency of the housing project for developers, buyers and urban planners. In terms of market economy, both

⁸⁴ Koolhaas, Rem (2000). pp. 318.

⁸⁵ Ibid. pp. 310

⁸⁶ Deviation is an important calculation to control the difference between planning and final outcome. It needs a design skill to achieve the maximum floor area for developers' profit-pursuit, and at the same time to meet the planning specification. In China, the deviation between the planned floor area and the designed floor area is normally about 5%.

⁸⁷ The *plan ratio* is the internal area of households to the gross area which includes public circulation and services, such as corridors, elevators, staircases, wells for pipe-line, etc. The *plan ratio* indicates the efficiency of investment. It means slightly different to investors – both the state and developers, and buyers. To the state or government, the higher the *plan ratio* is, the more available living space the same budget can offer to residents, or in the other way around, the less the same living space costs. To developers, the more profit can be achieved. To buyers, the *plan ratio* measures the percentage of their investment for their own private space and for the public or sharing space.

⁸⁸ Interview with Chen Shimin by Hua Li, 31 December 2005. “和记黄埔的要求是很苛刻的。每一个户型的正负的面积不能超过 2%，对于 120 平米的户型，正负面及不能超过 2 平米。平面系数要求很高，要达到多少，少了就不可以。仅是第一期的施工图，我就画了三遍。”

flexibility and regulation derive from the same purpose of acquiring the maximum value for investment. Architectural design is used as an instrument to meet this. Actually, this kind of economic effect is not peculiar in China. While studying the skyscrapers in New York and Chicago, Carol Willis points out:

This insistence on the linkage between profit and program is fundamental to commercial architecture, where the function of a building is to produce rents, and economic considerations govern design decisions.⁸⁹

That architectural design is largely devoted to technical roles in commercial projects does not mean that architectural practice is purely technical. Besides his professional skills, the importance of the architect and his job is raised by taking on the role of management in the planning stage and in the construction process. More than just providing professional service, the position of the architect -- in Chen's words, 'competence of architect to offer social services' -- plays a role in the stage of decision-making. In the case of the Huangpu Garden, Chen Shimin got in touch with the project in 1996. From then to 1998 when the contract was finally signed, Chen had submitted several unpaid proposals over one and a half years. Two things were crucial to securing the commission, and neither had much to do with design proposal itself. The first is his assistance to the developer in establishing a relation with the municipal offices of Shenzhen.

When I first got to the project, Hutchison Whampoa already had a number of proposals of Hong Kong's architectural offices. Mine was not taken into account. One of the major reasons to make us closer was that the developer then had not officially had the land

⁸⁹ Willis, Carol (1995). pp. 19.

and all the matters were in discussion. I helped them to come to Shenzhen, to contact the municipal agencies, and to arrange the meetings with the local officials. These things I did gave them an impression that, apart from design, the architect could help to resolve certain problems. Since then, they gradually had inclination [to me].⁹⁰

The second relates to the moment when the construction of SZCD was about to start and the overseas investments, mainly from Hong Kong, needed to be settled. In 1997, one year before the construction of SZCD was officially inaugurated, the Financial Crisis of Asia devastated the property market in Hong Kong and the confidence of some Hong Kong's developers about investing SZCD. In 1998, the Vice Mayor of Shenzhen and the Director of SZCD construction Wang Jū went to Hong Kong to check. The Head of the Planning Bureau, Liu Jiasheng, and Chen Shimin who was familiar with both cities and acted as a government expert consultant, were in the company. It was on this trip that Chen finally got the design commission for the Huangpu Garden. From Chen's point of view, 'that was a dramatic moment and change in the process'. He recalls,

Hutchison Whampoa was the first developer whom we met in the trip. Wang Jū asked the developer whether they would carry the project. If not, the government would give the land to local corporations. The developer said, they would and had already invited me to do the design. He excused the delay for Chen Shimin had not had a decent proposal. Therefore, I took the sketch from my briefcase and presented it to them in the meeting. The developer felt it quite workable. As far as all of them agreed on it, and the Mayor approved it, I got the commission.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Interview with Chen Shimin by Hua Li, 31 December 2005. “当我开始接触黄埔雅园这个项目的时候，很多香港公司都给他们[和记黄埔]做了方案。他们对我做的并不太看重。这在中间呢，有一个很大的靠近的原因是当时他们还在研究，他们还没有正式拿到地，我就帮他们到深圳来，安排他们和各部门及领导见面，讨论一些问题，一些指标的问题，结果我就起了一部份的作用，使他们对建筑师除了设计以外的社会服务能力提高了一个印象，觉得可以帮他们去解决一些问题，所以就慢慢地有了倾向。”

⁹¹ Interview with Chen Shimin by Hua Li, 31 December 2005. “我们第一个见的是和记黄埔。王炬问他们到底要不要开动，不要的话，就给国内的公司去做了。发展商说他们已经请陈世民做方案，[陈世民]一直没有拿出一个像样的方案，于是我就从包里把这张草图拿出来做了解释，发展商说

Chen's story gives a picture of the general working situation of the practising architect in China. At the stage of planning and decision-making, architects' work is engaged with social contact, the interest of developers and the policies of government. The local knowledge that Chinese architects possess in both professional and social terms enables them to take a position in mediating the international investment and the local administration, market and convention. Design is just a part of the work. Chen reviews his experience as such,

Every proposal was developing in the process. At the end, there was no much difference between them. What became important then was the architect's competence to offer the social services.⁹²

What Chen means by difference between the designs and 'social service' is fairly arguable. But in whatever form, the involvement of the architect in the work of 'management' in the pre-construction process lends a social visibility and credibility to the architects as well as the architectural profession. As far as the involvement goes beyond dealing with objects and technological issues, it allows architects to take a distinct position from civil engineers, whose job is usually to provide technological support and consultation at this stage.

A similar situation arose in the construction process. The position that Chen and his office held in the Huangpu Garden project was 'lead consultant' – a role of 'manager' in the production. According to the RIBA's definition, the jobs of

不错，交给王矩，王矩说我看也不错，在双方的认可下，王矩签了字，到此这个项目就拿到了。”

⁹² Interview with Chen Shimin by Hua Li, 31 December 2005.

'designer leader', 'lead consultant' and 'contract administrator' all belong to Architect's management services.⁹³ The function of 'lead consultant' is

described as direction, co-ordination, integration and monitoring of the activities of the consultant team; making or obtaining decisions for cost and programme control; communication between client and consultants; reporting to the client.⁹⁴

In the case of the Huangpu Garden project, apart from architectural design, Chen's office was commissioned for twenty-two contracted tasks, which directed the architect to take responsibilities of coordinating the work of all the specialised offices, such as civil engineers, equipment engineers, landscape architects, surveyors, interior designers, etc., by organising meetings, and supervising the implementation of the contracts; with seeking, recommending and examining materials and products; with drawing up detailed construction plans and programmes; and with checking, accepting and maintaining the final products at the post construction stage. These responsibilities were to ensure that the final outcome would meet professional requirements and standards. But the task of 'lead consultant' does not aim at ensuring the execution of architect's plans. Instead, the synthetic nature of the management job intends to make a balance between different requirements from different parties – client, consultants, contractors, material providers, etc. – through coordination, negotiation and supervision. This synthetic job in turn assures a

⁹³ RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) (2000). The position and the working scope of 'lead consultant' have not been officially defined in practising system of China. The definition that I quote here is from the documents of the RIBA because Chen's contact followed the system in Hong Kong, which is referred to the RIBA's system. Although there are some differences in different regions and in operation, the core function of 'lead consultant' is the same.

⁹⁴ Phillips, Roland (2000).

*position of the architect in the building industry.*⁹⁵

The title 'lead consultant' has not been recognised in China. Chen's contract followed the working conventions of the developer from Hong Kong, and acquired special permission to experiment with it. In order to fulfil his management tasks, Chen's office set up a particular group to work on site – the Department of Construction, which later becomes its working mode on other projects. In practice, some of the management jobs that Chen's office undertook in the Huangpu Garden project are not new to many architectural firms of China. However, his contract and position indicates two significant changes in the market period. First, against the subordination of architectural design to construction – 'design serves construction' – from the 1950s to 1980s, the leading position of Chen's office indicates an elevation of the importance of architectural profession in the process. Second, against the designation of architecture as one of the engineering professions in the broad category of 'building construction', the job of management legitimates a position for the architect as distinct from merely technological execution and hence from other building-related professions, such as the civil engineer. These two changes that Chen's case shows a transition and a potential to legalise and systematise the independence of the architectural profession in contemporary China.

This section has discussed the role of the architect in production

⁹⁵ There have been similar discussions around the role of architectural profession. See: Bartlett, John (1969).

of the Huagnpu Garden, from providing technical solutions to taking on a 'manager' position. My argument opposes many historical writings, which regard architecture as a purely intellectual discipline and a heroic development of architect's ideas by leaving out the working conditions. The argument is that, in reality, architectural practice is a social practice mediating different needs through professional skills and position. Handling finances, market relations, administration, technological support, etc., enhances the visibility of the architectural profession in the construction process throughout the society.

3.3 Seeking a 'Comfortable' Home

The analyses of the preceding sections are mainly concerned with professional discussions, regulations and operations. As far as buildings are ultimately inhabited by users, this section will look into property purchase through three cases – three householders' experiences of buying flats in the Huangpu Garden.

Buying a flat is a particularly modern experience and activity to make a home in a city and to respond and react to housing construction. In a traditional society, making a home was often fulfilled through building a house by the householders themselves. The making and building activities are not an individual work of one family, but rather rely upon the aid of local community via communal work and according to local custom.

Through the building process, householders would settle themselves not only physically, but also socially and psychologically. In contemporary Chinese cities, the practice of building a house is replaced by mass construction organised by city government and developers. The distribution of welfare housing determined by labour relation in the Revolutionary period changes to purchasing a property from the real estate market. Making a home is now an individual experience, while at the same time, relies upon a range of financial, commercial and municipal systems of the city. Purchasing a flat is a first step for individuals to build up their personal domain in a modern city.

The three cases in the Huangpu Garden are chosen out of ten households which I visited in 2005 and 2006. Two reasons lead to the selection. First, they bought the flats to occupy rather than for investment. The three householders are all migrants as are the majority of Shenzhen's residents. Two of them are from the other cities, and one from a rural village of Guangdong. They have lived in the city for about ten years, and intend to settle permanently – at least at the time when they bought and furnished their apartments. Second, the three householders bought their properties at different stages, from the start of construction in 2000 to post construction in 2004, and have different views of the purchase. Insofar as purchasing a flat and making a home are very individual experiences, the three cases will not be treated as the representatives of the residents in the Huangpu Garden and the residents in the city. Rather, we will try to explore certain common experiences which could help think

about the nature of the professional knowledge of architecture and architectural production. For this, the question of this section is: to what extent or through which way do the image-making, the spatial organisation of the housing development and the marketing promises determine the decisions of the buyers?

To answer this question, we immediately face another question: what did the buyers look for when they purchased a flat for occupation? In 2005 after the Huangpu Garden was sold out and had been in use for one and half years, I talked with a previous marketing manger of the development on how the buyers liked the property.⁹⁶ Perhaps to the 'surprise' of some architects, it was her point that the styles of the buildings and the themes of the gardens had little effect upon the decision of the buyers. What concerned them more was the location of the development, the brand of the developer, and the scale of the green area. The individual account of the quality of the property will be discussed later in this section. The question that her observation brings up is: does the making of the 'luxury' images matter to the buyers or the residents?

In my conversations with the residents in the Huangpu Garden, I noticed that they rarely used the exotic names – such as Le Parc Rome, the French imperial pond, etc.–, but instead the straightforward terms – such as the Phase One compound, the swimming pool, etc. When stating the reasons for their purchase,

⁹⁶ The interview took place on 25 February 2005.

they hardly mentioned the appearance of the theme gardens. Nonetheless, they did show their opinions on how the gardens were arranged and managed. In answering my question 'how you like the communal garden in your compound', a resident from the Phase One said:

I think it [the communal garden of the Phase One] is not as beautiful as the Phase Two's and Phase Three's. The Phase One's is too rough. Some aspects of the Phase One cannot compare to the Phase Two and Phase Three. For instance, it does not completely separate the circulation of pedestrian from that of vehicles. Children would go out [to the roadway] without bawaring. I think the design of the garden does not possess the spatial quality of the Phase Two – the sequence from one area to another. The only good thing of it is [that it is] light and spacious. The Phase One is Roman style which should be very elegant, but it isn't. It does not achieve the Roman style in my mind. I think the Spanish style of the Phase Two and the Vienna style of the Phase Three are better represented than the Phase One's. The garden of the Phase One represents that style just by employing some Roman columns, jardinières and so on. It is very literal, and does not have that kind of quality -- the [quality of] delicacy. Belt Collins says that the Huangpu Garden – its construction, management and topiary – does not deliver the [ideas of the] design at all, but the Zhonghai Noble [Zhonghai Huating] does it very well.⁹⁷

Apparently, what the resident is interested in is not whether the themes and the styles are 'genuinely' represented in 'architectural' terms, or living in a fantasised place as somewhere else. What she concerns is the living environment of 'here', which involves both imaginary vision (such as 'elegance' and 'delicacy') and practical account (such as 'safety' and management quality). In other words, the creation of a 'luxury'

⁹⁷ Interview with Zhang Su by Hua Li, 6 March 2005. “我觉得也没有二、三期漂亮。一期太粗糙了。有些东西一期跟二期、三期没法比的，比如说它就没有完全做到人车分流，孩子一不小心就跑到外面去了。包括花园的规划，我觉得就没有二期的空间感，那种一个区一个区的层次，唯一好的是比较敞亮。一期是罗马风格的，注重的是比较雍容的，但它也没有做出来。它并没有做出来我们心目中的那种罗马风格。我觉得二期的西班牙风格、三期的维也纳风格在风格上都要比一期表现的好一些。一期就用了一些罗马柱，花盆这些来表现那种风格，完全是形式上的，并没有那种气质，那种精致。贝尔高林就说黄埔雅苑完全没有把设计表达出来，包括施工，后来的管理，花草的修剪，而中海华庭就很好。” See: Appendix 5. The Zhonghai Noble (Shenzhen) [Zhonghai Huating] is another housing development in SZCD. It is in the 'European style', and the Belt Collins took charge of the landscape design of its communal gardens, too.

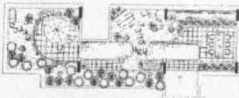


Fig. 3.3-1

image has a limitation in itself. Its effect does not seem to be adequately appreciated unless it can be expressed in terms of 'realistic' considerations. In the case of the three householders, the 'home' that they signified is not by the term 'luxury', but 'comfortable'.⁹⁸

Case one: Ms. Zhang and her top floor flat (21st floor) with a popular feature – roof garden – in the Phase One.⁹⁹ (Fig. 3.3-1) Ms. Zhang lived with her husband, one-year old child and her parents in the three-bedroom flat. She was a manager of a stock company. Her and her husband's work, social life and shopping were within driving distance of the Huangpu Garden. For daily shopping, she usually drove ten minutes to the Sam's Club owned by the global retailer Wal-Mart Stores. Although she and her family did not largely engage with the facilities and activities of the neighbourhood, she enjoyed the handy and supplementary services of the development.¹⁰⁰

Ms. Zhang is a 'rational' buyer in a modern sense. She bought her flat in advance when the whole construction of the Huangpu Garden started. For her, 'reliability' was more important than other factors, such as convenience, 'luxury' and beauty. To secure her purchase and her future home and life, she put them into a relation with the planning and market system:

⁹⁸ In my interviews of them, 'comfortable' was a common word that the householders used to describe their ideal home and what they wanted for their own apartments.

⁹⁹ Ms. Zhang's apartment was published twice in the local newspapers as a model of 'modern living'. One is about the bathroom of the master bedroom in the page of Fashion, Yin, Han (2003). The other is about her roof garden in the page of Finance, Wen, Silian (2004).

¹⁰⁰ See: Appendix 5. Ms. Zhang thinks that the supermarket in the Clubhouse is a necessary supplement to daily life.

The first reason for me to buy the property was location. By that, I do not mean that it is in the centre of the city, or close to public buildings and transportations. From the present viewpoint, it is nice, but it was not my reason. [...] Location for me means two aspects. One was proximity to the Lotus Mountain which is a permanently natural feature. I wanted to live near it. The other was the well-planned urban schema in this district, which clearly stated what was going on around the neighbourhood in the future. I found nothing that would annoy me.¹⁰¹

While municipal planning asserted the long-term vision of 'macro-environment', she tried to ensure the construction and service quality from the credibility of the developer in the market.

I am very concerned about the brand [of the developer]. I would not buy a property from a small developer. Especially when I bought the apartment off plan, it was still on paper. To some extent, my valuation of Huangpu Garden depended on the reputation of the company. [...] From my point of view, the Huangpu Garden should be constructed and managed to a high standard.¹⁰²

Ms. Zhang also took the practical use of the flat into consideration. From her point of view, the layout of the apartment and the roof terrace were particularly important. Ms. Zhang's flat merges two two-bedroom flats so that it has the family space – the living room, dinning room and kitchen – in the centre, and the master bedroom and the bedrooms for the parents and the child at each end. For the three generation

¹⁰¹ Interview with Zhang Su by Hua Li, 6 March 2005. The text is compiled from: “我为什么要买这？我觉得是位置。[...]这里面，我觉得有两点很重要的。一个是挨着莲花山，这是一个永久的资源，自然资源，我觉得守在这样一个自然资源边上。第二个呢，就是周边的规划，对我来说也很有意义。[...] 黄埔雅苑这里有一个很好的地方就是这里完全是新的，有很多人认为周围的配套设施很重要，其实我对这个不是很在意，比如说图书馆、少年宫、音乐厅什么的，可能很多人觉得这个很重要，现在看来也挺好的，但并不是我的选择，我所谓的位置也不是指它交通便利、地理位置临在中心，还不是这个，就是这两点，一个是莲花山的自然资源，一个是周边的规划比较完善，这个规划非常好，它哪片干什么，哪片干什么，很清楚，没有我不喜欢的，我觉得这个很重要。” The original text see: Appendix 5.

¹⁰² Interview with Zhang Su by Hua Li, 6 March 2005. “第二呢，我是非常注重品牌的。我很在意我买的是哪个发展商的，我不会去买很小的发展商的楼，特别是我买黄埔雅苑的时候是纸上的，我某种程度上看的就是李嘉诚的信誉。[...] 在我看来，黄埔雅苑、黄埔地产应该是一个建造质量非常好，物业管理非常棒的 [...]” See: Appendix 5.

family, the layout enables the young couple and their parents to keep a certain privacy and independence while sharing common activities.¹⁰³

The roof garden means more than mere ‘utility’ to Ms. Zhang. It is practical in use, and is also the feature of her personal domain and domestic life. Thus, for her, although expensive, it is a ‘valuable’ investment:

The roof terrace is the part on which I most value this flat. In fact, the cost of our terrace is quite high. Compared with the same flat on the 20th floor, I paid 310,000 *yuan* [about 1,610,000 *yuan* in total] more, which was just only a roof. In spite of this, I feel it worthwhile. Why did I choose the top floor? I had a very simple reason. When I have a child, the roof terrace would be a safe outdoor space for her growing up, particularly when the weather was bad. The other reason was that I saw roof gardens in my friends’ flats. I liked them. When I bought flat, I wanted one too. In fact, the roof garden brings a lot of joys to our life. Whenever my husband and I want to enjoy two persons’ world, we can have a relaxing space here away from our parents and child. It is precious to have a natural and peaceful space in the city centre. From very practical viewpoint, my husband and I are socialised persons. When we have a party at home, the roof garden together with the living room can contain different groups of friends at the same time. It indeed increases our hosting capacity.¹⁰⁴

Despite these rational considerations, Ms. Zhang was not fully satisfied with what she got:

As to my satisfaction of the property, the construction quality is bad. The management service is not good enough. I feel not satisfied with what the brand of the developer brings to me. [...] **What I have now are created by myself, or are given by nature, by the whole environment.**¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ The kind of new form of three generation family (*sandai tongtang* 三代同堂) is typical in Shenzhen. Shenzhen is a new and immigrant city. The average age of the residents is about 30 years old. The parents of most young people live in different cities and towns. When the parents retire or when young couples have children, the parents often come to Shenzhen to help their household matters and to look after children. At the same time, the young couple take care of their parents.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Zhang Su by Hua Li, 6 March 2005. The text is extracted. The original text sees: Appendix 5.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Zhang Su by Hua Li, 6 March 2005. “我对这个房子的满意度，从建造质量上来讲，质量很差的，物业管理也不太好，我觉得从李嘉诚这个品牌带给我的东西实际上我几乎是不满意，[...] 我得到的东西都是我自己创造的，或者是与生俱来的，是大环境给予的。”

To decode the relation between expectation, disappointment and satisfaction would need further study. In regard to the relation of mass construction and user's occupation, our thesis is that the struggle between standardised offers and the desire for a personalised life and domain would be an inevitable part of modern experience of making a home in a city. Ms. Zhang's case seemingly suggests that the struggle could not be thoroughly resolved by a purely rational account.

Case two: Mr. Zhang and his flat on the twenty-third floor in the Phase Four. (Fig. 3.3-2) Mr. Zhang lived with his wife, two boys and one baby-sister in the three-bedroom flat which was converted from four bedrooms. Occasionally, his mother came to stay with them. Mr. Zhang was a self-employed businessman. While his social life took place around the city, he and his family were largely involved in the neighbourhood. His office was 5 minutes on foot away from home. His children were enrolled in the schools within or near Huangpu Garden. After school, the boys often went to the Clubhouse with their classmates who lived in the same development. The family often went to the Lotus Mountain and the supermarkets nearby. The physical proximity makes Mr. Zhang feel easy to manage his life.



Fig. 3.3-2

For Mr. Zhang, *feng shui* was a fundamental factor in securing his purchase of his home, and determined the selection of the flat. Mr. Zhang bought the flat when the Phase Four was under construction, and yet the last three phases and communal

facilities were in use. To him, the house/flat was not just a physical accommodation supported by services and facilities, but a foundation to sustain well-being and prosperity of life, which would be protected by 'good' *feng shui*.¹⁰⁶ He said:

Different from others, the first thing I was concerned of buying a house was *feng shui*. [...] **Once *feng shui* is good, everything will be good.**

In his *feng shui* account, location was the first concern.

The Lotus Mountain has the best *feng shui* of Shenzhen. The layout of SZCD and the Lotus Mountain can be compared to the Forbidden City. Here [Huangpu Garden] is like Zhongnanhai. And the Phase Four is the best [*feng shui* location] in the Huangpu Garden. I never cared developer. In general, the developer who can get a land in such a good location should not be too bad and must have enough strength. [...] I don't care if it is in the city centre either. What I mean by location is itself as a whole and has no relation to the municipal buildings and investment in this area. The good location is owed to the Lotus Mountain.¹⁰⁷

The same consideration determined his choice of choosing the living compound, the building, the household type and the orientation. Nonetheless, *feng shui* for Mr. Zhang is more of an interpretative device to erase uncertainty than an absolute method to be followed. For instance, taking 'four' as an unlucky number, Mr. Zhang avoided it in the flat number and the building number. But it did not prevent him from regarding that the Phase with the number 'four' had the best *feng shui*. In fact, Mr. Zhang's belief in *feng shui* was well adjusted to reality and was

¹⁰⁶ Mr. Zhang did not systematically study *feng shui*. His interpretation of *feng shui* is based on his own knowledge, perception and experience.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Zhang Hong by Hua Li, 8 March 2005. “整个深圳风水最好的位置就在莲花山这里。莲花山的布局就像是故宫的布局，这里[黄埔雅苑]的位置就相当于中南海。我主要考虑的是风水问题。另外，黄埔雅苑的四期中[第]四期的地理位置最好，就是风水是最好的。我从来不会考虑这个[发展商]。一般来说，像这么好的地段的话，能拿到的话，投资商都不会太差。[...]肯定是有实力的开发商。[...]我不考虑这些[在深圳市中心]。我说的是这个地方的整体，和政府的建筑、投资没有关系。这里主要是莲花山好。” See: Appendix 5.

associated with perception.

What good *feng shui* [location] means is that it has everything. Facing the sea and against the mountain. Where can you find such a good place? Whether or not feeling comfortable really matters.

[...]

I bought the flat after I saw it. I had seen the buildings in the Phase One, Phase Two and Phase Three. If they were bad, I would not buy it.¹⁰⁸

Mr. Zhang’s case seems opposite to Ms. Zhang’s. Unable to fully trust the market system and government policy, he expects that the supernatural powers could protect him from invisible and unpredicted threats and dangers.¹⁰⁹ The protection of the ‘best’ *feng shui* not only comforts psychological anxiety of the future, but also ensures the uniqueness of his choice – the one that he chose is the most suitable one to him in the city.



Fig. 3.3-3

Case Three: Ms. Ye and her second floor flat in the Phase Four, which has the same layout with the ‘European style’ show apartment. (Fig. 3.3-3) Ms. Ye lived with one maid and two sons who studied abroad. She had her own business, and work, entertaining and shopping were within driving distance of the Huangpu Garden. Ms. Ye hardly used the facilities of the Huangpu Garden, and had little contact with her neighbours and the management company. She often walked around the Lotus Mountain and met her friends there.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Zhang Hong by Hua Li, 8 March 2005. “风水好了，这一切就都会好了，都会有。所谓风水好，风水好，就是这一切都要有。这里靠着山，面着海，这么好的位置你到哪里去找。关键是感觉舒不舒服。” “我是看了楼了才买的，我看了 1、2、3 期，感觉不错才会买的，如果特别差的话，我也不会买。” See: Appendix 5.

¹⁰⁹ Nuttinee Karnchanaporn’s doctoral thesis gives an insightful analysis of the transformation of traditional spatial practice (‘superstition’ in modern sense) into current practice in arranging domestic space in Thai society. Karnchanaporn, Nuttinee (2005).

Compared with Ms. Zhang's rational analysis and Mr. Zhang's *feng shui* interpretation, Ms. Ye's choice seems more dependent upon perception. She bought the apartment when the whole development was completely in use, and made the decision after seeing the flat.

I had seen several properties before this flat. When I first saw it, I liked it immediately. The layout was practical and ample. Every room had direct daylight. The ventilation was terrific. I have never found a comparable flat. The view from the living room is extensive. The front [communal] garden is beautiful and spacious. Feel very comfortable. From here [the living room], you can even see Hong Kong over there. This kind of view is really rare for an apartment on the lower floors. I did not expect any flat available at that time, because it was a well-known star property in the market. I was lucky. This was the last one directly bought from the developer.¹¹⁰

Ms. Ye's description is quite personal. The factors that she preferred – the ample layout, the direct daylight and the good ventilation – has nothing to do with rational evaluation or physical definition. Instead, they are the projection of her feeling of 'spaciousness' and 'brightness', which are acquired at the moment of perceiving the space, and also related to her own experience in the past.

The residential area that I lived in before cannot compete with the Huangpu Garden at all. Its service was okay, almost as good as the Huangpu Garden. But the environment was incomparable. It was dark, narrow and chaotic. The building in front of my flat was so close that my flat could not get enough sunlight. The heavily ornamented interior made it even more depressing. As there was no underground car park, all the cars were packed along the pedestrian lanes. The environment was really unpleasant.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Interview with Ye Gaoqin by Hua Li, 6 March 2005. “在看这套房子之前，我看了好几个楼盘。我一看到它，就很喜欢。它的平面很实用，特别宽敞明亮，每个房间都有直接的阳光，通风非常好。我从来没有见到过可以和它相比的。前面的视野很好，花园又漂亮又宽敞。感觉很舒服。从这里[客厅]，你甚至可以看到香港那边。这样的视野在低层的房子里真的很少见。当时，我没想到还有房子剩下，因为在市场上，它是著名的明星楼盘。我的运气很好，这是最后一套从开发商手里直接买的房子。”

¹¹¹ Interview with Ye Gaoqin by Hua Li, 6 March 2005. “我以前住的小区和黄埔雅园根本没法比。它的服务还不错，和黄埔雅园差不多，但环境就没法比了。又暗、又窄、又乱。我家前面的那幢楼离得特别近，我的房子都晒不到太阳。室内装饰很多，显得更加压抑。它也没有地下停车场，

The contrast that she made between the ‘past’ and the ‘present’ sustains her purchase, and reflects her aspiration for a better future. In fact, Ms. Ye was quite satisfied with her ‘new’ home, from interior arrangement of the flat, to the environment of the development and the service management. Nonetheless, Ms. Ye’s choice is not casual, although her story of buying the flat may sound dramatic. Before she saw the property in the Huangpu Garden, she had been aware of the basic conditions – the fame of the developer, the popularity of the development in the market, and the government investment in the whole area – which she also acknowledged. In addition, the quietness of the development that she particularly enjoyed was produced by the large communal garden which keeps traffic noise distant from the buildings. That is to say, Ms. Ye may not very consciously owe her decision to the market operation, the municipal construction, the development arrangement and the architectural design, but their effect worked on her when her perception and aspiration were satisfied.

It seems impossible to give a simple definition of what a ‘comfortable’ home is in architectural terms. The three householders present different accounts of their purchase and different views of managing life and home. The differences are partly due to the personal experience and aspiration, and are partly related to the stages when their purchase took place – the flat ‘in paper’ (Ms. Zhang) to the flat in physical existence (Ms.

Ye). Nonetheless, although different, their accounts for a 'comfortable' home do not seem to contradict the construction of the 'luxury' living – the image production, the arrangement of the housing development and the management of the services. Yet, the construction does not satisfy the householders all the time. It is worth noting that most of the householders' considerations – security, *feng shui*, largeness of the development, location, quietness, etc. – come from outside the concern of 'architectural quality' in formal terms of functional efficiency, programme, methodology, material and technological innovation, etc. Even though some terms are commonly shared by professionals and users, such as ventilation and lighting, the meanings and perspectives are slightly different. To the former, they are a description of physical conditions. To the latter, they introduce personal experiences and psychological effects. The gap between the two perspectives indicates the scope of knowledge within architectural profession. On the other hand, it indicates a mediating role that architectural production and practice play between the dwelling of the individuals and the system of the city.

This chapter has set out a discussion of relationship between practice of architecture and commodification in the contemporary Chinese city, by a case study of the production of a 'luxury' housing project Huangpu Garden in Shenzhen. The analysis has gone through issues concerning the building 'style', the spatial arrangement of the housing development, the analogy of spatial types and the work of the architect. It has tried

to understand the construction in terms of material fantasies, management of the city, commodification of domesticity, and the identity of the architectural profession. Two points emerge. First, Architecture is a modern practice mediating different demands in the city, and is justified and recognised on this level. Second, the construction has inevitably been accompanied by imports, from materials, to capital investment, to planning and practicing systems. As discussed before, while modified to local conditions, the imports do contribute to and sustain the formulation and constitution of the professional status of architecture in China.

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Chapter Four

The China Central Television Headquarters: 'Is China an Experimental Field for Foreign Architects'?¹

¹ As we have discussed, in general use, 'foreign' and 'western' are interchangeable in Chinese. In the following part of this chapter, I will keep the original usage of the translated texts, '外国 (*waiguo*)' as 'foreign', and '西方 (*xifang*)' as 'western'.

This is the last chapter of the thesis. It will continue the examination of architectural practice in contemporary China. In the last chapter, we discussed the emergence of the so-called 'European style' and architectural production and practice at the time of consumption. We tried to demonstrate that the prevalence of the 'European style' was an effect of 'commercialisation' rather than 'westernisation'. This chapter will be particularly concerned with political involvement in architectural production. Our assumption is that there is no necessary relation between a political regime and one form of architecture. Although determined by the same political intention -- the construction of national symbols, the articulation of the state power and the implementation of government policies, a national project can take different architectural forms, use different design approaches, employ different groups of architects, etc. Because of this, designs by European and American architects for national projects in China are neither a sign of 'westernisation', still less of 'colonisation'. To stress the central argument of the thesis once again, the dichotomy between what is 'Chinese' and what is 'western' is neither helpful to an understanding of trans-national practice nor useful when it comes to recognising the real issues of Chinese architecture.

As a consequence, this chapter will focus on a national project, the new China Central Television Headquarters (CCTV HQ) in Beijing, and the debate provoked by it. The new CCTV HQ is sponsored by the national television media organization China Central Television Headquarters (CCTV). CCTV is the largest television broadcaster in the country, and by its nature and remit, it represents the voice of the

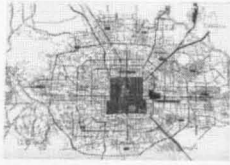


Fig. 4.0-1

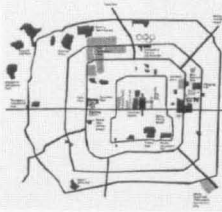


Fig. 4.0-2

Central Committee of the CCP and the Central Government, the state ideology and the mainstream culture of the nation. Located in the Core Area of the newly planned Central Business District (CBD) in the eastern part of Beijing, it is supposed to be part of the renewal programme for the capital, and to produce a 'new' image of China.² (Fig. 4.0-1, 2) Its new site, almost symmetrical with the old one in the west, is only 6 kilometres -- less than 10 minutes driving distance -- away from Tian'anmen Square and the Forbidden City, the nation's symbolic and political heart.³ From whatever angle it is examined, whether it is seen as a gigantic machine of the state ideology, the representation of the national culture, the image of a 'modernised' and 'internationalised' capital, the new CCTV HQ is enormously significant.

Clearly, whoever was chosen to design such a building as the CCTV HQ was unlikely to avoid criticism. But the participation of the 'global' architect Rem Koolhaas and his 'bold' proposal have certainly intensified levels of controversy regarding the project. More specifically, they have provoked the debate that **'China is becoming an experimental field for foreign architects'**. For supporters of the project, the collaboration between CCTV and Rem Koolhaas signified that the ideology of the Chinese government has shifted from a

² According to the government's goal, the construction of the CBD intends to 'provide facilities and services for an increasing number of financial organisations, multinationals and modern enterprises', and to 'perfectise [sic] the function of Beijing as a first-class modernised international metropolitan'. The Collection of Planning & Design Schemes of Beijing Central Business District (2001). pp.8. CCTV announces that to move into the Beijing CBD will 'most conveniently gather the latest information on the city's economic development, which represents the country's overall economic situation, thus guaranteeing a prompt, accurate and sound delivery of news reports'.

³ On the political significance of the Tian'anmen Square in the history of socialist China, see: Wu, Hung (2005). Zhongnanhai, next to the Forbidden City, has been an operational heart of the country, since 1949. A number of the Party's and State's leaders, such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zeming, etc., have lived and have worked there.

'conservative' position to one of 'openness'.⁴ But for opponents, the collaboration represents a 'westernisation' or a 'colonisation' of Chinese architecture and culture. Nonetheless, it is not the case that the 'dispute' is between the two parties: representing the 'indigenous' or the 'local' on the one side and the 'foreign' or the 'western' on the other. Instead, it is a response to the situation that architecture is transferring from a state-directed occupation to an independent profession in the last twenty years. The issues that were concerned in this debate, such as the problem of being 'modern', the introduction of the 'western modern' architecture and the expression of the 'Chineseness' in architecture, are indeed a reflection of the discussions of the whole thesis.

In current Chinese discussions, the term 'experimental' is often associated with the term 'avant-garde' (*qianwei, xianfeng*),⁵ which to some extent implies a relation to 'western' architecture or architects. In the context of Chinese architecture, the usage of 'avant-garde' was translated from English, French and Russian texts. In the 1980s, it was used to mainly refer to the early 'modernist' movements, such as Constructivism, and occasionally to 'postmodernism' in the 1960s, such as Robert Venturi's theory.⁶ Since the late 1990s, it began to be applied to some buildings in China, most of which were designed by foreign architects, such as Koolhaas's CCTV HQ scheme, Paul Andreu's National Grand Theatre, Herzog and de Meuron's

⁴ Wang, Hui (2003). pp.46.

⁵ avant-garde (*qianwei, xianfeng*) (前卫, 先锋)

⁶ Zhu, Pei (1992).

National Stadium, and Zaha Hadid's Guangzhou Opera House.

In neither English nor Chinese architectural contexts, is the term 'avant-garde' a well-established concept; it is not anchored to a movement, school or even a proposition. Nonetheless, its connotation in the two contexts is slightly different. Originally, 'avant-garde' was a French military term, which meant the vanguard of an army. In the nineteenth century, the use of the term began to be adopted in the fields of art and literature, and ever since has been common usage in French, English and German. Generally, 'avant-garde' may be regarded as synonymous with the 'new', the 'advanced' and the 'novel'. However, what makes it distinct from the 'new' and the 'modern' is the oppositional and confrontational stance it is seen to take with respect to the mainstream conventions of politics, ideology and culture. That is to say, a conscious opposition and break from tradition underlies the existence of an *avant-garde*.⁷ In the fields of art and architecture, the term 'avant-garde' is historically associated with the emergence of 'modernism' and the various movements of the early twentieth century, such as Surrealism, Dada, Constructivism, etc.

In Chinese-speaking context, the sense of 'avant-garde' as a military metaphor 'vanguard' – 'the foremost officers or troops of an

⁷ In his paper 'Avant-garde and Kitsch' (1939), the American art theorist and critic Clement Greenberg placed two opposite categories to describe the cultural products of modern time, 'avant-garde' and 'kitsch'. While the former intends to separate itself from the society and holds an elitist position, the latter caters to commercialisation and masses' interest. At the same time, Greenberg points out that 'avant-garde' can be watered down and transformed into 'kitsch'. But at this point, the fashioned 'avant-garde' is no longer 'avant-garde'. Greenberg, Clement (1961).

advancing army or in a battle' – is not very different.⁸ Nor is its historical reference in the field of architecture. However, it seems that Chinese usage emphasises the idea of a leading position in a new trend more than opposition to conventions. In 2003, *Time + Architecture*, a Chinese architectural journal, published a special issue on 'Experiment' and 'Avant-garde', and tried to clarify the distinction of the two terms:

'Experiment' and 'avant-garde' are terms that show up frequently in essays on cutting-edge architectural works in contemporary China. However, the connotations, differences and histories of the two terms have not been examined thoroughly. In many essays, 'experiment' is generally confused with 'avant-garde'. But, in general usage, 'experiment' is a broader concept than 'avant-garde', which [*sic*] refers to the betrayal and continuous exploration of existing order, and might result in a 'trail' rather than a royal road. The concept of 'avant-garde' not only covers the betrayal of existing order, but a pre-style which announces social, artistic, or architectural revolution. The concept of 'avant-garde' also refers to the relationship with social revolution, political, art institutions. The avant-garde in architecture usually refers to the Modern Movement during 1910s to 1930s, otherwise known as the historic avant-garde.⁹

To decode historical and conceptual relation between 'experimentation' and 'avant-garde' movements is beyond the scope of this section, whereas the intention of this clarification is to indicate two points. First, in a general usage, 'avant-garde' is a more adjectival word, which does not strongly associate itself with historical arguments. Second, as far as general understanding is concerned, it neither necessarily connotes a

⁸ Cihai (1999). pp.925. “先锋：行军或作战时的先遣将领或部队。”

⁹ Editorial (2003). The English version is quoted from the journal itself. Here is the Chinese text as a reference. “‘实验’与‘先锋’近年来频繁出现在讨论当代中国建筑前沿实践的文献中，然而其基本内涵、相互差异以及它们自身的历史性并未在理论层面得到深入探讨。在不少文献中，‘实验’与‘先锋’往往被简单地混为一谈。然而，在一般意义上，‘实验’是一个比‘先锋’更宽泛的概念，主要是指艺术行为对现有秩序的背叛和不断的探索，其结果可能并非走向坦途而成为‘试验品’。‘先锋’的概念不仅包含了对现有秩序的背叛，而且是一种前风格，预示了社会、艺术或建筑中的根本性变革的到来。‘先锋’概念也往往涉及与社会革命、政治、艺术体制的关系。建筑中的先锋有其特定含义，通常是指20世纪10—30年代的现代主义运动，也被称为历史先锋派。”

political and social agenda, nor an oppositional and confrontational position to 'tradition' or current 'conventions'. Nonetheless, despite the difference between general and academic understanding, 'avant-garde' seems to be commonly regarded as something 'new' that aspires to identify the main direction of the future. One aim of this chapter is to see how an 'avant-garde' project is produced, appreciated and criticised in contemporary China.

4.1 Production of the 'Display' Building

4.1.1 The CCTV: A Building for 'Display'

On the 22nd of September 2004, after a year's delay and postponements, the groundbreaking ceremony for the new CCTV HQ eventually took place. Only about two weeks before, its location in Beijing CBD had finally been approved by the Central Government, and even then construction permission was still in progress.¹⁰ Because of all this, the ceremony was purely 'symbolic'. About 800 people attended, among them high-ranking officials in charge of propaganda and media administration from the Central Committee of the CCP and the

¹⁰ As a large-scale national project, the construction of the new CCTV headquarters was approved by the State Development and Planning Commission and had to pass through a series of permission procedure: 2001. 03, the initial application for the project was made;

2001. 05, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television submitted the application for the project to the State Development and Planning Commission;

2002. 01, the State Council in principle consented to the construction of the new CCTV;

2002. 02, the State Development and Planning Commission approved the new site selection of CCTV;

2002. 05-07, the invited international bid of architectural design for the new CCTV;

2002. 12, the OMA signed the architectural design contract with CCTV;

2004. 01, the structure proposal of the CCTV was approved by the State Development and Reform Commission;

2004. 05, the Landscape Plan and Transportation Plan of the CCTV were approved; and the Fire Fighting Plan was submitted to the upper office;

2004. 09. 22, the ceremony of groundbreaking took place after postponing for one year.

state departments, the heads of Beijing Municipal Government, and the leaders of CCTV itself.¹¹ On the same evening, CCTV's United News Programme (*xinwen lianbo*) – the most official and probably the most influential news programme in the country – broadcast it.¹² Without a single word about the 'rumours' that OMA's (Office for Metropolitan Architecture) proposal for the new CCTV HQ's had been abandoned, the news item countered suspicions that had been spreading around that time and clearly sought to show that the project had the full support of the Central Government and Central Committee.¹³ Daniel Zalewski, editor of the *New Yorker*, witnessed the ceremony and noted:

The building's design was never mentioned, nor were any of the European visitors. This ceremony was clearly about politics, not

¹¹ Li Changchun, the member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee; Liu Yunshan, the member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, the member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee and the Head of the Publicity Department of the Central Committee; Liu Qi, the member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee and the Secretary of Beijing Municipal Committee; Wang Qishan, the Mayor of Beijing; Xu Guangchun, the Director of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television.

¹² The United News Programme (*xinwen lianbo*) of CCTV started from 1 January 1978, and lasts thirty minutes from 19:00 to 19:30pm everyday. The channels of CCTV-1 and CCTV-news and the main channels of provinces' and cities' television stations broadcast at the same time. CCTV-news rebroadcasts the Programme from 21:00 to 21:30 everyday. 'Since 1 September 1982, the Central Committee of CCP prescribed that important news would be first issued in the United News Programme, and founded its important position as a channel issuing official news. The tenet of the Programme is "to propagate the voice of the Party and Government, and to transmit the affairs of the world". But the order to broadcast the news is not dependent on their importance, but the position of the state leaders. The order usually is: diplomatic affairs, visits, meetings and inspections that the members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee have; the meetings of the Central Committee of CCP and the Central Government; short films of ideological education; news-in-brief (progress of every field in China, spiritual state of Chinese people and splendour of the country); and the last five minutes international and sport news.' (自 1982 年 9 月 1 日起, 中共中央明确规定, 重要新闻首先在《新闻联播》中发布, 由此开始奠定节目为官方新闻发布管道的重要地位, 节目宗旨“宣传党和政府的声音, 传播天下大事”; 但新闻先后次序排列不是以其重要性, 而是以国家领导人的排名先后而定的。其大致内容按播出顺序是: 中央政治局常委的外交、访问、会议以及视察活动, 中共中央或中央政府开的某项会议, 思想教育类短片, 简讯 (中国境内各个领域的进步, 人民大众的精神面貌, 神州大地的风采), 最后是时长通常不超过五分钟的国际新闻和体育新闻等。) <http://baike.baidu.com/view/4647.htm>, retrieved 30 December, 2007. Xu Min once analysed how the state ideology took up the form of the United News Programme and how the Programme was a device of constructing the image of current China. See: Xu, Min From my point of view,[complete the reference] his conclusion of the role of the United News Programme in such construction is also applicable to CCTV.

¹³ New CCTV Headquarters Will Break Ground in September, *Architecture Times*, 26 August 2004.

architecture.¹⁴



Fig. 4.1-1

Nevertheless, there was 'something' about 'architecture'. In the United News Programme, images of the new CCTV HQ were presented showcasing the transformation of the decayed site, which had been a factory in the Revolutionary period, into a spectacular vision of the future (Fig. 4.1-1). CCTV declared:

The designers believe CCTV's new headquarters will combine the special needs of an ever-expanding media organization with a landmark architectural style. [...] It is set to become the new symbol of China's growing media industry.¹⁵

Two factors in this declaration are clearly related: CCTV as the leading media organisation in the country and the CCTV HQ as a 'new' symbolic landmark. By its nature, the new CCTV HQ would be a building for 'display', which has two connotations in this context: it would house the institutional 'producer', 'narrator' and 'organiser' of images on the screen, and would function as an efficient machine to produce 'views' to be viewed. At the same time, the building itself would be part of the organised 'views' and would be a 'new' presence, situated as far as possible from what had gone before in both its domestic and international scope. To be both 'new' and to make the 'new' visible were demands made of the project:

The important tasks and functions of CCTV, as a national TV network, require that it must represent the **leading image** of China's television industry. The development of CCTV should also represent the **main trend** of the development of the country's TV industry. Therefore, the CCTV new site project should incorporate **new** concepts, **new** techniques and **new** methods so as to suit the **new** changes in social development and the **new** requirements of the audiences for television. The architectural design should meet the **advanced** international standards, fully reflecting the unique, cultural and **advanced** functions

¹⁴ Zalewski, Daniel (2005). pp. 124-125.

¹⁵ <http://www.cctv.com/program/bizchina/20040923/100872.shtml>, retrieved date: 30 December 2004.

of television. The new CCTV compound should be ecologically friendly, user-friendly and systematic in functions. The functional facilities should be complete. Construction techniques should be the state-of-the-art. Equipment used should be **excellent**. The structural layout should be rational. The architectural designs should be **innovative** and the environment beautiful. Efforts should be made to ensure the finished new CCTV compound would be a **landmark architecture** recognized both at home and abroad, which markedly reflects the **spirit of the times** and a **high level** of cultural taste.¹⁶

Questions that arise are: what does this demand to be 'new' mean? What does it symbolise or represent? And how is its symbolic position constructed and legitimated?

Starting with the last question, the new CCTV HQ compound will serve a single user, CCTV, which is also the sole investor in the project. CCTV, as its name 'China Central' indicates, occupies the leading position in China's television industry.¹⁷ In terms of the hierarchy of the state administration, CCTV remains at the top; its president is regarded as having an equal position of that of a vice-minister or the vice-governor of a province. Established in 1958, it was the first television station in the country, and now is the largest one with the highest coverage. By the end of 2004, it reached more than 90 percent of the population of the country and had 16 channels, including three international ones in Chinese, English, French and Spanish. In addition, CCTV has a strong capacity for production. It has its own production departments, such as the China Television Production Centre, the Central News and Documentary Studio and the Beijing Science and Education Studio, and its own outdoor film making areas (*waijingdi*) in the

¹⁶ See: the official website of CCTV: http://www.cctv.com/newSiteProgram/cs/general_info.htm, retrieved date: 30 December 2004.

¹⁷ According to the *China Industry and Commerce Administration Regulation* (《中国工商管理条例》), only the state-owned enterprises at the national level can be named 'China' or 'Chinese'.

provinces of Jiangsu, Guangdong, Shangdong and Hebei.¹⁸ More than 75 percent of its output is produced in-house. At the same time, CCTV also possesses administrative functions. Its China International Television Company is in charge of distributing television programmes and is the only state-approved company that deals with the exchange of international copyright for television programmes. Its newspaper, the China Television Weekly has a circulation of 3 million copies of each issue, and its journal Television Studies is the leading magazine on TV media in China. From the publicised figures, CCTV has retained the highest income in the industry.

As a television network owned by the Central Government, CCTV has a responsibility to represent the opinions of the Central Committee and the Central Government, and to lead the direction of mainstream culture in the nation as a whole. According to its own account:

CCTV is an important institution of news and public opinion in China: it is the important voice of the Party, the Government and the People, and important in the ideological and cultural field in China, and is one of the mainstream media outlets, having the most competitive capacity in contemporary China. It undertakes multiple functions, [such as] news broadcast, social education [conduct], culture and entertainment, information service, etc. It is the major channel from which the public receives information, and it is also an important window by which China knows the world and the world knows China.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Waijingdi* literally means outside scenic area. It is an artificial compound preparing for film shooting. For instance, in Jiangsu Province, the Wuxi Waijingdi was built in song dynasty style.

¹⁹ The quotation is from the official website of CCTV, <http://www.cctv.com/profile/intro.htm>. The access date was 30 December 2004. From then to 2007, the introduction was expanded and more details about its financial situation were added in. But this self-identification remains the same. Interestingly, this introduction was only in Chinese in the website. “中央电视台是中国重要的新闻舆论机构，是党、政府和人民的重要喉舌，是中国重要的思想文化阵地，是当今中国最具竞争力的主流媒体之一，具有传播新闻、社会教育、文化娱乐、信息服务等多种功能，是全国公众获取信息的主要渠道，也是中国了解世界、世界了解中国的重要窗口。”

In his study of China's television broadcasting during the Reform period, Ran Wei remarks:

As a government institution of central propaganda importance, television in China functions as an extension of political control of the party.²⁰

Nonetheless, CCTV's competitive capacity is protected by state policy and law. According to the *Administrative Regulations of the State Council* issued in 1997, all broadcast and television stations should be set up by government. As such, 'no other organisations and individuals are allowed to set up broadcast and television stations', and foreign capital was forbidden to engage with the actual management of TV stations. In principle, individuals and private companies were not allowed to found or control television production studios, either.²¹ Although this policy faces the challenge of marketisation and the negotiation of its implementation, the constraints are still profound. Liu Changle, the president of Phoenix Satellite Television – a popular Chinese privately owned television station, once commented:

Comparing our disadvantages with CCTV, ours are obvious. Our cultural and news sources have many limitations to a large degree. For instance, following the Chinese leaders to visit foreign countries, only CCTV is in the special airplane, not Phoenix. [Furthermore] only CCTV can report on momentous national affairs. No Phoenix. Therefore, in terms of the sources of news, the national television station has unchallengeable advantages.²²

When it comes to sources of news, CCTV's privileges reinforce

²⁰ Ran, Wei (2000). pp.330.

²¹ Broadcast and Television Administrative Regulations (1997). 2.10.

²² Liu, Changle (2004). “我们的劣势和央视比我们的劣势很明显，我们的文化资源、采访资源在很大程度上有很大的局限性，比如跟着中国领导人出访，专机上只有中央电视台，没有凤凰。重大的国事采访只有中央电视台，没有凤凰。所以在新闻资源方面国家电视台有着不可替代的优势。”

its authoritative position and financial success. Since the 1990s, the 5 minutes between the United News Programme and the Forecast have been the most expensive time to run commercials. From any point of view – status, coverage, production capacity and finance – it is impossible at the moment for any other domestic television station to challenge CCTV.

Physically, the new CCTV HQ is characterised by its scale. Its site, which occupies 18.7 hectares of land, which two planned city roads (E8 and N10) will pass through, is bigger than Tian'anmen Square – the largest square in the world. Its gross area, 575,000 square metres (550,000 square metres floor area at the design stage), is more than three times the size of the Great Hall of the People – the largest national building in Mao's time –, and is twice that of the Jin Mao Building in Shanghai – the tallest building in China and a symbol of the economic successes of the Reform and Opening period.²³ Its Main Building is the largest single building in the country; indeed, its 405,000 square metres floor area will make it more than 50% bigger than the Freedom Tower to be built at Ground Zero in New York – 241,450 square metres floor area. When completed, the new CCTV HQ is supposed to be able to accommodate 200 channels and more than 10,000 people.

²³ The Great Hall of the People is the office of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress Council. It is located next to Tian'anmen Square of Beijing and was built in 1959 as one of the Ten Grand Projects. Its floor area is 174,000 square metres. The Jin Mao Tower is 420.5 metres high and offers 292,500 square metres floor space. It is located in Lujiazui, the Financial Centre of Pudong in Shanghai. The Jin Mao Building was invested by a state-owned enterprise, the China Export and Import Corporation, which is subject to the Economy and Trade Department. Its estimated cost was 540 million US dollars.

What makes the new CCTV HQ remarkable is not only its massive scale, but also its 'inclusive' programme. The new CCTV compound consists of four parts – the fifty-one-storey office building, 'CCTV', the thirty-one-storey cultural centre, 'TVCC', the 3-hectare media park and the service building. They will contain all the facilities necessary for TV making, from administration, news, broadcasting, studio and production, to a public theatre, exhibition space, a hotel, outdoor filming spaces and supplementary services, such as security, energy supply, etc. From Chapter Three, we can see that this kind of 'inclusiveness' remains central to the idea of the 'work unit' of the Revolutionary era, in which the physical proximity of different departments was intended to achieve administrative efficiency.²⁴ To many Chinese, the very size of the CCTV HQ itself represents national strength. Lu Zhigang, a Chinese architect who attended the CCTV's competition on behalf of the China East Architecture and Design Institute (CEADI) in Shanghai, commented:

There is no doubt that when the CCTV is completed, it will be the largest television building in the world, and will add a proud mark in our numerous 'firsts'. The rational account of the project and the activities themselves [therefore] becomes less important.²⁵

Certainly, the construction of the new CCTV HQ does not seem to follow the principles of the market economy, although it may be expected to represent the success of state policy in shifting from a planned economy to implementing market relation. In

²⁴ About the 'work unit' system, see: Section 3.2.2.

²⁵ Lu, Zhigang (2003). "毫无疑问，建成后的中央电视台，将会是世界最大的电视媒体建筑，我们的无数个世界第一上又会骄傲的写上一笔，而项目和行为本身的合理性，此刻变得不重要了"。 Lu Zhigang is the architect from East China Architectural Design and Research Institute. He was in charge of architectural design of the CCTV bidding.

fact, the new CCTV HQ could be the most expensive building built in China so far. The estimated investment was 5 billion *yuan* (about 360 million pounds) in 2002, and increased to 7.9 billion *yuan* in 2005. This is three times the cost of the National Grand Theatre – the other major recent national project –, and almost twice that of the Jin Mao Building. Even then this figure does not take into account land rent and maintainance fees. Compared with commercial high-rise offices and hotels, the per-square-metre cost of the new CCTV HQ may not be at the top, but the massive construction makes the entire cost reach a level that any private sector or company would find hard to meet or justify. Someone estimated the income and profit of CCTV and the depreciation charge of the new headquarters, and commented:

From the viewpoint of investment management, the proposal of CCTV's new headquarters is not sensible. Of course, CCTV probably does not care about this problem at all, and does not mind this expense, because by its nature, CCTV is not an independent private corporation, but a propaganda institute of the government and a state-owned enterprise.²⁶

It would be said that the new CCTV HQ is not simply an example of state propaganda proclaiming economic success, but also a clear demonstration of the superior economic strength of the state in relation to the market.

One factor that the construction of the new CCTV HQ intends to

²⁶ Zhu, Yi (2003). “从投资经营的角度看，央视盖新总部大楼的计划是不明智的。当然，央视可能根本不关心这个问题，也不在乎这笔开销，因为央视本质上就不是一个独立的私营企业，而是一个政府宣传机构+国营企业”。The author's calculation was based upon limited publicised information then. Thus, the estimation that the author made may not be accurate. However, insofar as the analysis was based upon the theory and principles of investment in market, it reveals the contradiction of the construction of the CCTV to market economy.

associate itself with is the staging of the Beijing Olympics in 2008, which is the first summer Olympics that China has hosted.²⁷ These Olympics could be the most spectacular international event in recent years. As John and Margaret Gold point out, the Olympics Games is more a mechanism for image-production than a purely sporting event:

The Olympics provide a stage for host cities and nations to project themselves to the world, with their impact made more memorable by the powerful spectacle integral to the event. That spectacle stems primarily from the sheer scale of the Olympics, from the grandeur and drama of their setting, and from the colourful ceremonies, rituals and symbols embedded in the modern games.²⁸

For the Beijing Olympics, the production of the spectacle is first and foremost a political task. To ensure that the fulfilment of this task did not run any risks, the government retains the power to guide and control construction projects, in collaboration with the market economy.²⁹ Wei Jizhong, the ex-secretary of the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC), has commented:

To host the Olympics, China takes the form of market operation led by government rather than the usual way of depending upon market operation supported by government. Therefore, we can only draw some successful lessons from the other Olympic Committees, but should not and cannot copy their ways.³⁰

²⁷ From 2002 to 2004, the new CCTV HQ was announced to be completed before the Beijing Olympics. Now it is planned to be completely finished in 2009. Part of it will be in use during the Olympics in 2008. Nonetheless, from my point of view, the delay won't change the political significance of the Beijing Olympics, and the initiation to construct the CCTV as a national symbol.

²⁸ Gold, John Robert and Gold, Margaret M. (2005). pp.142. Although the discussion of John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold's book focuses on the 'western city', and although every host city tries to arise a different theme, that the Olympics function as an international stage for showing and displaying does not seem different.

²⁹ The management of seven Olympic projects in Beijing adopts the mode of BOT (Build – Operate – Transfer). But the two 'image' projects – the National Stadium and the National Aquatics Centre – operated differently from others. 58% investment of the National Stadium (known as the 'bird nest') comes from the state, and the investment of the National Aquatics Centre (known as the 'water cube') is managed by Beijing Municipal Government. Therefore, the design competitions of the two projects were separated from the bids for contractors and operators, and the winning proposals were decided beforehand.

³⁰ Olympics Is not a Competition of Wealth, China Cools Down from Fever (2004). The article was originally published in the magazine China News Weekly, 24 August 2004. “举办奥运会，中国采取的是政府主导下的市场运作形式，而不是通行的政府支持下的、市场为主的运作形式。因此，

The ties between the performance of Chinese athletes in the Olympics and the representation of national strength are always the patriotic issue on the official agenda. In 1993, after Beijing failed in its bid to host the Summer Games, the People's Daily issued an Editorial headed 'Stably Going towards the World':

During the one hundred years history of the Olympics, old China left us a 'zero' record, and suffered the humiliation of being the 'sick man of Eastern Asia' [*dongya bingfu*]. The 'Reform and Opening up' policy gave us the courage and the conditions to apply [to host the Olympics]. [...] The application process is a process of participating, of boosting the construction of socialist material civilisation and the spiritual civilisation in our country, and of stimulating national spirit and reinforcing national solidarity.³¹

This kind of highly patriotic statement may not appear often in the current propaganda for the Beijing Olympics, but its core points are retained and transferred now onto a concern with the promotion of the 'display' of the 'characteristics of Chinese culture' and the achievements of the 'Reform and Opening up' policy. A journalist's commentary is a typical example of the public discussions of the Beijing Olympics:

Holding an 'Olympiad with Chinese characteristics' is inevitably a great issue that the BOCOG [Beijing Organising Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad] faces. The 'Chinese characteristic' means 'what I have and others do not'. The key point of it is to represent the broadness and depth of Chinese culture and the eminent tradition of Chinese nation.
[...]

Beijing Olympics is an unusual stage upon which to display the accomplishments of twenty-seven years of the Reform and Opening of China, and it is right to exhibit the great achievements and progress [...].³²

我们只能借鉴其他奥运会组委会的成功做法，而不宜也无法照搬他们的做法。”

³¹ Editorial (1993).

³² Su, Xiangxin (2004). “办一届“具有中国特色的奥运会”无疑是摆在北京奥运组委会面前的重大课题。“中国特色”意味着人无我有，其要旨在于体现中华文化的博大精深与中华民族的优良传统。[...] 北京奥运是中国改革开放二十七年来难得之展示成果的舞台，正可显示国家取得的巨大成就与进步[...]。” The article was posted on the official website of the China News Service

Readers of the previous chapters of this thesis may already feel acquainted with the patriotic tone. Indeed, either under the Nationalist regime of the 1920s or the Communist regime of the 1950s, this was the prevailing public discourse. As we analysed before, and as this commentary shows, the elevation of the 'Chinese characteristic' is not simply an issue of culture, but more importantly is associated with the legitimacy of the government in power. At this point, the construction of the Olympic projects, including the new CCTV HQ, is not something 'new' or different from what went on in the past.

One may wonder whether, in strict terms, the new CCTV HQ is the 'real' Olympic project. Certainly, in terms of serving the function of 'display', it does not seem less important. During the period of the Beijing Olympics, CCTV will act as an information hub for both domestic and international media:

As the biggest and the only television station that possesses the right to report the Olympics in our country, China Central Television will undertake manifold tasks of broadcasting and reporting it to the domestic audience, producing international signals, providing technological support and service to the International Olympic Committee and other media during the 2008 Olympic Games.³³

If the sport facilities serve as the stage for exhibiting international performances, CCTV will play both the role of an

(CNS, 中国新闻社), which is owned by the state and is the second largest news agency in China.

³³ The quotation is from the official website of the Beijing Central Business District Administrative Commission of Beijing Government, <http://www.bjcbd.gov.cn/newscenter/cbddynamic/cbddynamic3037.htm>, retrieved date: 29 December 2004. The item came from CCTV's 22 September 2004 report at the official website, <http://www.cctv.com/news/xwlb/20040922/102014.shtml>. “作为我国最大同时也是惟一拥有奥运报道权的电视机构，中央电视台将承担 2008 年奥运会国内转播报道、国际公共信号制作、为国际奥委会和其他媒体提供技术支持和服务等多项任务”。

'editor' 'framing' the views of the performances on the screen and of the channel distributing them. This function is not very different from that performed by other television stations. But what is particular in the case of CCTV is the power designated to it to hold the sources, which in turn helps it to forge its self-defined mission to represent the 'modern' image of China to be viewed by both domestic and international audiences, when the Olympics take place. Moreover, compared with the sport facilities, the 'display' function of the new CCTV HQ will be much more enduring and far-reaching in the daily lives of the Chinese people in the years to come. Here, we do not mean to exaggerate CCTV's influence, and we do not ignore the criticism levelled at CCTV in the domestic sphere, or the challenges it faces and the compromises it has to make during a time of marketisation. The point here is that instead of celebrating the success of the market economy and an openness to the international world as some people assume, the construction of the new CCTV HQ is dedicated to state power, the control of information sources, the distribution of official propaganda, and the organisation of the image of 'modern' China and Chinese people.

Returning to the first question posed in this section – what does the CCTV's requirement to be 'new' actually mean? From a historical point of view, the production of symbolic buildings for the purposes of 'display' is neither new nor unique in the Reform period. From the 1920s onwards, this kind of production has been organised under different regimes at different times,

as can be seen, for example, in the Sun Yet-san Mausoleum in Nanjing built during the Nationalist period, and the Ten Grand Projects built in Beijing during the Socialist period. Wu Hung, an art historian, looks into the latter case and the organised parades in Tian'anmen Square, and argues that:

To display is to unfold to view an organised body of signs: images, words, objects, buildings and people. These signs are not necessarily ready-made and collected; they are often fashioned and assembled for a display, especially when this display serves to showcase a self-fulfilling political ideology. Although still a representation, such a display has less to do with describing and depicting the phenomenal world; its challenge is instead to turn political ideology inside out, revealing through concrete means what is supposed to be most essential to it – the source of political power and legitimacy, the structure of political institutions and geographies, and the short- and long-term objectives of a regime. Exactly for this reason, this type of display has a primary but unspoken agenda in forging a symbolic language, which manifests abstract notions and principles as visual spectacle, and translates ideas and theories into shared experience.³⁴

Two points can be taken from Wu's analysis. Firstly, the organisation of this kind of 'display' tries to 'externalise' the state's ideologies, policies and instructions, and to visualise and enhance the abstract notion of the nation-state. Secondly, the 'display' is an artificial construction, which does not commit itself to particular 'languages'. Different political agendas at different time can take up different symbols and representations. In terms of the new CCTV HQ project, it functions as a means of organising the 'display' and of constructing the conception of 'China' or the 'Chinese nation' in a way that is not so different from the projects of the 1950s to the 1970s, such as the Great Hall of the People, the Museum of Chinese History and the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall. (Fig. 4.1-2, 3) But in order to



Fig. 4.1-2



Fig. 4.1-3

³⁴ Wu, Hung (2005). pp.85.

articulate the progress and development that the 'new' policy has achieved, it seems to be important for this design to project a sense of distance from - or even opposition to - the images of the past. Therefore, in terms of the purpose, nature and programme, the construction of the new CCTV HQ continues the line of practice seen in the past. To be 'new', according to this requirement, mainly means identifiably 'new' shapes for buildings, 'new' languages of architecture and the employment of 'new' technologies that could satisfy the purposes. We can imagine that what CCTV wanted to choose was not so much a particular architect, but a proposal that can convey its articulation and symbolisation most powerfully. Nonetheless, insofar as the concept 'new' and the concept 'China' or 'Chinese nation' are both abstract, the representation of them in architecture would have a potential that allows different and possible interpretations for different purposes. The potential, on the one hand, may enable 'new' building forms to come into being; and on the other hand, lays the ground for the divergent opinions and readings that we will see in the following sections.

4.1.2 Koolhaas's 'Beijing Manifesto'

In the last section, we tried to demonstrate that the construction of the new CCTV HQ was not something 'new', but continued a practice that had been seen throughout the twentieth century. Insofar as it was intended to function as a 'machine' for 'display' and a material symbol of state power, it was not essentially different from what had been done before. Our discussion revealed that while different political regimes - Nationalist and

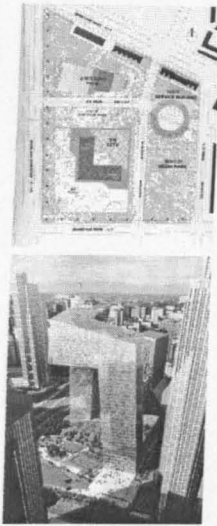


Fig. 4.1-4

Communist -- could appropriate the same forms of architecture, one particular regime could also adopt different forms. As such, a change in architectural form did not necessarily represent a shift in state ideology. This section will look at the design strategy and approach of Rem Koolhaas and his office OMA. Our questions are: to what extent does OMA's proposal fit the requirements of CCTV? How does he come to terms with the architectural situation in China? And what does he try to achieve in the project?

An obvious answer to the first question could be that OMA's proposal for the new CCTV HQ is both spectacular and 'astonishing'. (Fig. 4.1-4) OMA's proposal consists of two high-rise buildings, the Main Building (CCTV) and the Television Cultural Centre (TVCC). The Main Building CCTV features a twisted frame, whose geometry challenges the feelings of stability and gravity that a normal building tries to attain. Rising from a ten-storey platform, two cubic buildings lean upwards in two directions at six degrees, and are joined together at the thirty-seventh floor by an angled twelve-storey cantilever overhanging in the sky, at 162.2 metres height. The facade is surfaced by a glass curtain wall with irregular glazing panels, and a diagrid network on the surface articulates the supporting structure of the building.

The TVCC Building stands beside the Main Building and is assembled in the form of cells of different volumes defined by the requirements of the building programme. A zigzag envelope

covers the assemblage and gives an outline of the building. The shapes of the two buildings do not have any symbolic or metaphoric reference to the 'Chinese characteristics' or 'traditions' defined by the conventions of modern Chinese architecture.³⁵ Koolhaas once remarked:

This building might have been inconceivable to the Chinese, but indeed, only in China would it be realized.³⁶

The question, therefore, is: why and how did Koolhaas recognise this?

In 2005, in an interview by Ma Weidong, a Chinese architect and editor who works for the Japanese journal A +U, Koolhaas gave this explanation of winning the commission of the new CCTV HQ:

[...] it was definitely not a coincidence. [...] it's not an issue of moment but an issue of really meticulous preparation. I think, in that sense, we were really meticulous about getting to China, understanding Asia first, and putting ourselves in a situation where we actually knew what we were talking about. That is the really great thing about the Harvard project. Then we were able to **create our own context and our own body of knowledge** before we were forced to intervene with architecture.³⁷

To understand the point at which he came to terms with the architectural situation in China, we first need to look at the Harvard project. Obviously, since the Harvard project was not directly concerned with 'architecture', the knowledge that it

³⁵ Koolhaas once compared the quality of the CCTV to the Forbidden City in Beijing. From my point of view, the reference sounds more like a strategic announcement and an attempt to identify programmatic similarities between both of them. From the published explanation of the building generation, it is obvious that the reference is neither the starting point of the proposal, nor the intention behind it. Charles Jencks draws attention to the formal resemblance between the Main Building of the new CCTV HQ and a Chinese moon cake. The resemblance does seem to be accepted by the Chinese, as moon cake never takes such a shape of twisted 'frame'.

³⁶ Shohei, Shigematsu (2003). pp.38.

³⁷ Ma, Weidong (2005). pp.10.

provided would be understood more in terms of how it provides a strategic understanding of the mechanism that enables large-scale construction and changes to take place in Chinese cities. Nonetheless, before examining the nature of the Harvard project, we need to outline Rem Koolhaas's architectural approach.

Koolhaas is a critical successor to 'modernism'. In 1968, when 'postmodernism' and 'historicism' came to pronounce, he went to London to study at the AA, where the influence of Archigram was at its height, and which was a site for experimentation with radical ideas and alternative approaches to 'modernism'. After graduation in 1972, he continued postgraduate study with Oswald Mathias Ungers at Cornell University and his research on metropolitan culture at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York. In 1978, he published his first book, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, which was not only about how metropolitan culture gave rise to its architecture, but more importantly about how 'the architecture generated culture'. This contradicted a number of movements at that time, such as 'postmodernism', 'historicism' and 'contextualism', which had arisen from the crisis of 'modernism' in practice, and which had tried to keep 'new' constructions in cities in line with the formal continuity of 'history' and 'context'. In 2001, twenty-three years later, Koolhaas wrote the following sentences in *Great Leap Forward*:

Maybe Team X and Archigram were, in the sixties, the last real 'movements' in urbanism, the last to propose with conviction new ideas and concepts for the organisation of urban life. In the long

interval since their time, there has been a huge increase in our understanding of the traditional city; there has been the usual ad hoc intelligence and improvisation, and the development of a kind of plastic urbanism, increasingly capable of creating an urban condition free of urbanity.³⁸

So, in contrast with the idealism of the 'modernists', Koolhaas tries to seek 'a new realism about what architecture is and what architecture can do' '[o]n the basis of contemporary givens'.³⁹ In 1975, he co-founded the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) with Madelon Vriesendorp and Elia and Zoe Zenghelis. In 2000, he was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize for 'defining new types of relationships, both theoretical and practical, between architecture and the cultural situation, and for his contributions to the built environment, as well as his ideas.'

The Harvard project was a research project concerning the Pearl River Delta (PRD) in the south of China, and was undertaken by a group of students from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1996. (Fig. 4.1-5) It was one of a series of studies directed by Koolhaas for the 'Project on the City' programme, which 'researches the effects of modernization on the contemporary city' and studies 'the evolving agents, relationships and consequences of contemporary urbanization'.⁴⁰ The PRD was one of the first areas which experimented with the 'socialist market economy' in China. From 1980 to 2000, the population in this area increased from 12,590,000 to 42,910,000.⁴¹ Two new cities, Shenzhen and Zhuhai, were developed from scratch while



Fig. 4.1-5

³⁸ Koolhaas, Rem, Inaba, Jeffrey and etc. (2001). pp.27.

³⁹ Koolhaas, Rem and Mau, Bruce (1995). pp.xix.

⁴⁰ <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/people/faculty/koolhaas/courses.html>

⁴¹ In middle of the 1990s, it was estimated that the population in this area would reach 36,000,000 in 2020. Koolhaas, Rem, Inaba, Jeffrey and etc. (2001).

being designated 'Special Economic Zones' in 1980.⁴² In the case of Shenzhen, its population increased from 344,100 in 1979 to 10,290,000 in 2004. The Harvard project was mainly focused on a group of cities in this area, Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Guangzhou, Dongguan and Macao, and their relationships in the regional network. In 2001, the fieldwork for the Project, in the form of interpretation and conceptualisation, was published as a book – *Great Leap Forward*. The book's red cover with gold coins already indicates the main theme of the research: 'a complex urban condition that has resulted from a uniquely transformed political environment' – the interplay of 'communism' and 'capitalism'.⁴³

To Koolhaas, the driving force behind the 'relentless process of building on a scale that has probably never been seen before' in the PRD⁴⁴ was due to the desire for a 'better future', which was embedded in government planning, investment in the real estate market, and the aspirations of individuals:

Here it is only a matter of speculation in terms of a future condition, linked perhaps to the incredible speculative energy of a communist system that always explained and amnestied to the present with regard to an ideal future condition.⁴⁵

Nonetheless, what interested Koolhaas was not the picture of an 'ideal future', but the 'present'. Insofar as the market principle did not work in the same way as it did in the capitalist

⁴² The Special Economic Zone as a policy was put forward in 1979. In 1980, four SEZs were first set up. They were Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou and Xiamen. A number of policies were experimented with in order to attract overseas investment and to stimulate the growth of economy. For instance, the city governments had more rights to deal with the financial affairs of their cities, while in principle, they did not get investment from the Central Government.

⁴³ Koolhaas, Rem, Inaba, Jeffrey and etc. (2001).

⁴⁴ Ibid. pp. 27.

⁴⁵ Koolhaas, Rem (2000). pp. 332.

countries and that in reality failures constantly occurred and were adjusted, he turned to the mechanisms of 'communism'.

Our assumption was that it was more appropriate to look at it as a more final apotheosis of the communist system. Communism has always had mechanisms by which the tortures and the difficulties of the present were justified by the sublime quality of the ultimate destination. In art this was called socialist realism. It was utopia made real: the future condition was depicted in the most realist manner as a justification and an explanation for the present toil.⁴⁶

The question of the extent to which, if at all, Koolhaas believed in communist ideology does not seem to be the point.⁴⁷ What was more interesting to him was the 'instability of metropolis' that existed in both capitalism (New York) and communism (the Soviet Union and China). In the case of China, the communist system meant in particular the dominant power of the state. After winning the new CCTV HQ project, he made this point more clearly:

What attracts me about China is [that] there is still a state. There is something that can take initiative [sic] of a scale and of a nature that almost no other body that we know of today could ever afford or even contemplate.

Everywhere else - and particularly in architecture - money is everything now. [...] Money is a less fundamental tenet of their ideology.⁴⁸

Insofar as CCTV is backed by the state, it could potentially bear a cost from which the private sector would shrink. We may reduce the strategic understanding to the following: insofar as

⁴⁶ Ibid. pp. 324.

⁴⁷ Koolhaas once said that his interest in architecture was motivated by Constructivism of the Soviet Union. In 1974, he co-wrote an article on 'Ivan Leonidov's Dom Narkomtjajzprom, Moscow', published in the *Opposition 2*. In the interview by Ma Weidong, he admitted that he was directing research on the relationship between communism and architecture. Ma, Weidong (2005).

⁴⁸ Koolhaas's words are quoted from: Leonard, Mark (2004). The comments appeared after winning the CCTV project. Insofar as he had stressed that the 'classical norms of market economy' in the PRD did not work as in Europe, I believe that he had this strategic understanding from the Harvard Research Project, although he did not make such a clear statement in the related publications.

being 'new' was explicitly required and a vision for a 'better future' was strongly desired, CCTV would be a good client with which to realise an 'inconceivable' design.

For Koolhaas and OMA, the new CCTV HQ provided a chance to 'reform' a building type – the skyscraper.⁴⁹ Koolhaas's interest in the skyscraper can be dated back to his first book, *Delirious New York*, in which this building type was appreciated as a very invention and container of metropolitan culture and the universal embodiment and apparatus of modernity.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, in 2004, he wrote:

The skyscraper is a bizarre typology. Almost perfect at its invention – and more than any other more evolutionary type, it is an invention – the skyscraper has become less interesting in inverse proportion to its success. It has not been refined, but corrupted; the promise it once held – an organisation of excessive difference, the installation of surprise as a guiding principle – has been negated by repetitive banality. [...]

For Beijing's new CBD, more than 300 new towers are planned. Asia has adopted the skyscraper as the symbol of its modernity, almost to the exclusion of all other typologies, at precisely the moment that the type's possibilities seem exhausted.⁵¹

In an attempt to produce buildings that were 'neither simple copies of prototypes nor those reinvented from the recent past', this time, OMA claimed to have innovated a new form of skyscraper – a 'loop':

A new icon is formed not the predictable 2-dimensional tower 'soaring' skyward, but a truly, 3-dimensional experience, a canopy that symbolically embraces the entire population an instant icon that proclaims a new phase in Chinese confidence.⁵²

⁴⁹ Koolhaas's and OMA's declaration of such a renewal probably just came after the building shape was formed rather than from the beginning when the design work started. But undoubtedly, to beat other skyscrapers and to be different from them were their intention.

⁵⁰ Koolhaas, Rem (1978).

⁵¹ Koolhaas, Rem and McGettrick, Brendan (2004). pp.473.

⁵² OMA (2003b). pp.32.

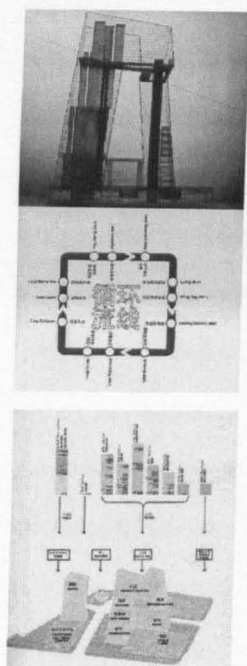


Fig. 4.1-6

According to OMA, the 'loop' is the organisational form of CCTV. Its formation is based upon the concept of 'integration', which aims to promote 'collective collaboration' within the institution. At a functional level, the 'loop' embodies the service system, 'circulation' and structural support of the building, whereas at a programmatic level, it interconnects all activities and 'the entire process of television making'⁵³ (Fig. 4.1-6):

So that each worker will be permanently aware of the nature of the work of his co-workers – a chain of interdependence that promotes solidarity rather than isolation, collaboration instead of opposition. [...And] the building itself contributes to the coherence of the organisation and proclaims a strong new identity to the world.⁵⁴

This integration and interconnection gives the form of the building. That is to say, the form of the new CCTV HQ articulates the operation of the television media, and CCTV's unique character – self-sufficiency.

In terms of design method, to integrate the different programmes does not seem particular to the CCTV HQ project. A similar approach can be found in the OMA's design for the Seattle Public Library, which was designed in 1999 and completed in 2004. As showed in the proposal for the new CCTV HQ, its design process can be roughly described as such: mapping the use of different types of space of the Old Library, re-assorting and integrating them, interlinking them as a 'chain' according to the programme of the Library, and folding it into an envelope shaped by the Building Code. In consequence, a

⁵³ OMA (2005a), pp.39.

⁵⁴ OMA (2003a).

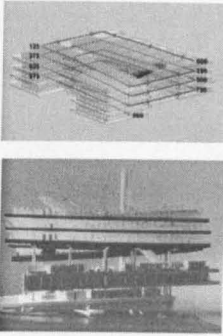


Fig. 4.1-7

zigzag 'ramp' was formed, and runs continuously through four storeys. It accommodates twofold uses at the same time: for the library to store and display books, and for readers to linger around. (Fig. 4.1-7) OMA's declaration had almost the same tone as it did in the case of the new CCTV HQ:

The Book Spiral implies a reclamation of the much-compromised Dewey Decimal System. By arranging the collection in a continuous ribbon - running from 000 to 999 - the subjects form a coexistence that approaches the organic: each evolves relative to the others, occupying more or less space on the ribbon, but never forcing a rupture.⁵⁵

Despite the same design method, OMA's proposal for the new CCTV HQ seems to be based upon an incorporation of Koolhaas's idea of 'bigness' and the institutional organisation of the 'work unit'. Koolhaas's article 'Bigness or the Problem of Large', written in 1994, was published in *S, M, L, XL*. In this essay, Koolhaas claimed:

Only bigness can sustain a promiscuous proliferation of events in a single container. It develops strategies to organise both their independence and interdependence within a larger entity in a symbiosis that exacerbates rather than compromises specificity.⁵⁶

That is to say, to Koolhaas, 'bigness' is not merely an issue of size and scale. Its core idea, which stems from his research on the blocks of Manhattan, concerns the coexistence of interactions and diversities within a single structure. Hal Foster once commented on OMA's practice and Koolhaas's theory of 'bigness' as follows:

Koolhaas pitched Bigness as 'the one architecture that could survive, even exploit, the now-global condition of the tabula rasa'.

⁵⁵ Kubo, Michael (2005). pp.34.

⁵⁶ Koolhaas, Rem and Mau, Bruce (1995). pp.495-516.

In effect it was Manhattanism without Manhattan: like the skyscraper-block returned in a single building, these new mega-structures would permit a great variety of programmes, and they would not be constrained by any grid.⁵⁷

Foster's comment was written in 2001, a year before Koolhaas and OMA took part in the bid for the new CCTV HQ, and was based on OMA's proposals for government projects in Europe – such as the master plan for 'Euralille' in 1990, and the research projects directed by Koolhaas – the ones on the PRD and 'shopping'. This showed that 'bigness' is a sort of 'universal' paradigm which is drawn from and is embedded in Koolhaas's and OMA's practice in different places, either in the form of design or in the form of research. Whether or not the new CCTV HQ could realise this diversity is a question.

In the Chinese context, to promote a collective-based organisation is not 'new'. As discussed in Section 3.2.2, the work unit, which brought the work place, collective facilities and living spaces together onto one site, had been a key organisational form of the Revolutionary Era.⁵⁸ From the Chinese viewpoint, this organisation was not only to improve the co-operation of workers and boost productivity, but also to pursue administrative efficiency. While this system has faded since the 1980s, the basic concept of self-sufficiency and integration has remained in certain types of institution, such as universities, hospitals, military facilities, residential developments, etc. CCTV would be one of these organisations.

⁵⁷ Foster, Hal (2001).

⁵⁸ See: Section 3.2.2, pp. 226–228; and Chapter Three, footnote 56, pp.225.

Compared with the old CCTV compound, the new site retains similar arrangements. In the old site, the main building designed in 1987 accommodates all departments and collective services, together with a hotel for the Media Centre, a theatre for performances, and security and service facilities. The new site, of course, makes some changes. At a physical level, it will no longer be entirely divided from the urban fabric by surrounding walls or fences as is the old one. The TVCC is planned to be open to the public and its ground level will be near the level of the street, as will the Media Park. However, this openness is limited. The Main Building will sit on a 6 metres high plinth. Even though there are designated entrances for the public, it will keep its sense of 'wholeness'.⁵⁹ Its 'canopy', which will overhang the site and will house administrative departments, seems to be a place from which to observe and claim the whole territory rather than to 'embrace the population' as OMA proposes. The Service Building that will 'fly' over the city road will mark the boundary of this territory. For security reasons, the Service Building will accommodate guards' dormitories,⁶⁰ and certain security measures will be placed around it. So, despite a degree of openness, the territory of the new site will be visually, symbolically and spatially marked out and supervised. Wang Hui, a Chinese architect from Beijing, once commented:

The opportunity of CCTV is that it has a single owner, it wants to represent a unified will, it has a unified administration, it conducts a unified production process, and it is a small unified society ... this kind of unification is simply lacking in other skyscraper projects,

⁵⁹ In the competition jury of the new CCTV HQ, the OMA's presentation mentioned the consideration of security. They declared that, the self-sufficient organisation of the Main Building would be easy to close and secure. The Main Building sat on a raised plinth, through which a more secure and a more belonging to CCTV's outdoor landscape would be formed.

⁶⁰ OMA (2005b).

which are occupied by numbers of small owners and tenants, and with which the architects like us are dealing [in practice]. As a state television station, its rigid security system will be adequate enough to allow it to withdraw from the whole urban fabric, without mentioning that the situation of nowadays Beijing is open to individuals' liberty, as discussed above. It is these preconditions that enable the new CCTV HQ to have a different form in the type of skyscraper.⁶¹

Wang Hui's comment provides an important support to our argument that, in either terms – the internal organisation or the external relation to the city, the new CCTV HQ retains certain forms and concepts that the work unit had in the Revolutionary Era.

It is worth noting that this kind of institutional arrangement is not something particular to China. In all countries, a similar form can be found in institutions that have a unified administrative system, such as military compounds, colleges, etc. To discern the differences between what OMA *meant* by 'collective collaboration' and what the Chinese *understood* 'collective' to be is beyond the scope of our discussion in this section. Our point is that at a time when many Chinese are pursuing independence from state ideology and trying to escape the dominance of 'collective organisations' of the past, OMA's promotion of 'collectivity' sounds like a retreat into that past, and, as such, seems unlikely to be regarded sympathetically by Chinese architects.⁶²

⁶¹ Wang, Hui (2003), pp. 49. "CCTV 的机会在于它是一个所有者，它要体现统一的意志，它有统一的管理，它是一个统一的生产过程，它是一个统一的小社会……这种统一性恰恰是我们这些建筑师在其它的要被无数的小业主合租户分割的摩天楼项目中所没有的。作为国家电视台，它的严格的保安系统也足以允许它从整个城市脉络中剥离出来，更不用说前面所论述过的当前北京城市状态对个体解放的大放绿灯。这是 CCTV 的造型可以在摩天楼类型中另辟蹊径的先天条件。”

⁶² When I look through the debate on OMA's proposal for the new CCTV HQ in China, the promotion of

In Koolhaas's statements, it is difficult to sort out what is intended to be a serious argument and what is a piece of rhetoric. However, it would seem that certain observations are appropriate. The first concerns the relationship between the architectural design of OMA and the organisational form of the new CCTV HQ. Most observers in Europe would expect a new Headquarters for CCTV to abandon extreme centralisation and to initiate a process of decentralisation, both in terms of action and in terms of location. In terms of the history of broadcasting in Europe, the decision to group all the functions and the personnel of CCTV into one centre and into one central building would seem to be a regression to the 1960s. Certainly, the BBC television centre in White City, with its apparent attempt to both maintain the BBC as a monolithic organisation and to house it in a single grand architectural project, is a typical example of the practice of the 1960s. Such a project, however, has proved to be contrary to the direction of the organisational development of the BBC, which has been characterised by a greater degree of decentralisation in which regional centres of the BBC have been established in the major cities of the UK.

Secondly, BBC's production has increasingly relied on the use of independent production companies for a significant proportion of its programmes. Thirdly, the rise of new functions of the BBC, particularly in the field of the commercial marketing

'collective collaboration' was hardly mentioned by the Chinese, either in terms of appreciation or in terms of opposition. On the one hand, it seems that many Chinese architects only look at it as a rhetorical strategy. On the other hand, 'collective' is a kind of 'outdated' word in current China, as it has the strong ideological tone of government and the past.

of its own programmes, requires different sorts of physical provision. Clearly, the day is over for vast monolithic headquarters in the UK. If one expects the same kinds of pressures to arise in China, it would rely upon an increase of different regions to produce their own regional material both in the fields of news and entertainment. And if China experiences a rise in independent TV production, then OMA's design and its promise of an integrated single work centre for CCTV runs the risk of becoming a 'white elephant'. On the other hand, it may be that in the immediate political future of China, the government will see their own interest best served by having a strong centrally organised form of television, in order to maximise their control over ideology. But in this case, the arguments of Koolhaas concerning 'bigness' and capacity of the very 'big' to provide the greatest diversity within a single container look weak. In the case of the CCTV HQ, 'bigness' will be used to minimise diversity and to become a physical condition for the implementation of regulation and uniformity. The central argument for the 'loop' as a means to guarantee diversity seems weak. A Chinese journalist commented on the collaboration of CCTV and Koolhaas as follows:

CCTV needs a striking enough figure in 2008; and Koolhaas, who stresses density and is concerned with urban density, needs a project with a real challenge.⁶³

Perhaps we can re-evaluate the collaboration between the two in the following way: CCTV needs a striking enough figure for 'display' in 2008, and Koolhaas needs a strong sponsor to

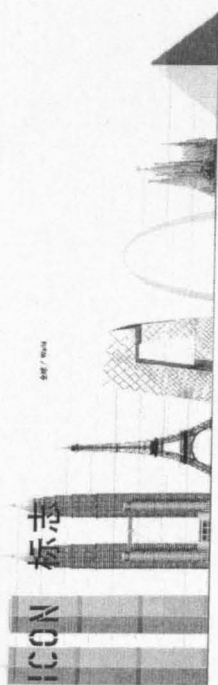


Fig. 4.1-8

⁶³ Wang, Yin (2003b). "CCTV 需要在 2008 年有一个具有足够吸引力的形象。强调密度、着眼于对城市密度关注的库哈斯需要一个具有真正挑战意义的项目。"

realise his ambition. (Fig. 4.1-8)

4.1.3 The Competition Jury

In the last two sections, we discussed the nature of the new CCTV HQ project and the incorporation of Koolhaas's theory and OMA's design in terms of what was required for the CCTV HQ. Our argument was that there was no necessary relationship that one form of architecture is welded to one political ideology. The status of the architect does not necessarily represent the status of the client. This section will look into the organisation of competition jury for the new CCTV HQ. Our questions are: how was this 'inconceivable' proposal chosen? And from which point of view did the jurors, particularly the Chinese jurors, agree on it?

On the 18th of July 2002, three months after the bidding document was issued, the competition jury for the CCTV HQ gathered at a hotel, called the Beijing Eastern Garden International Conference Centre. The Conference Centre is a large compound located in the Shunyi District of Beijing, 55 kilometres away from the city centre and 25 kilometres away from Beijing International Airport. Three days before, the proposals from ten architectural offices around the world had been handed in. Nine experts, Charles Jencks, Arata Isozaki, Rocco Yim, Liu Kaiji, Zhang Jinqiu, Wu Yaodong, Ke Huangzhang, Chen Gang and Ding Wenhua, respectively from America, Japan, Hong Kong and China, were on the board. The jury would meet for four days. Each design office had an equal



Fig. 4.1-9



Fig. 4.1-10



Fig. 4.1-11

chance to present its scheme and to answer questions posed by the board. After the meeting, the jury would recommend three proposals without priority in the shortlist. (Fig. 4.1-9, 10, 11) CCTV would make its final decision through negotiation and consultation with the three companies.⁶⁴ Yet, many Chinese surmised that this would provide a 'space' for leaders in higher positions to approve the final decision. Compared with the one for the Ground Zero project in December of the same year, the competition jury of the new CCTV HQ was kept away from the sight of the public, and seemed to be more 'architectural' and in control.

The whole competition for the new CCTV HQ bid was managed under the aegis of national law and local regulations. The Beijing International Tendering Company was entrusted to organise it on behalf of the client. The competition system for architectural design started in the 1980s was formalised and regulated in the 1990s. According to the *People's Republic of China's Tendering and Bidding Act* and a number of state and local regulations, the new CCTV HQ was deemed to fall in two categories – big public facilities and state property – that require a design competition to be initiated. The competition should have a minimum of three qualified companies in attendance.⁶⁵ In the case of the CCTV HQ, ten design firms and offices from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Netherlands, France, Germany, and America were invited by the client:

⁶⁴ This is one of the common ways of choosing the final proposal in China.

⁶⁵ *The People's Republic of China's Tendering and Bidding Act* was enacted on 30 August 1998. According to it, the state departments, such as the State Development Planning Commission and the Ministry of Construction, and the local governments respectively issued a series of documents to specify the scopes, the procedures, the supervisions, etc.

China Architecture Design & Research Group (CAG), Beijing Institute of Architectural Design (BIAD), East China Architectural Design & Research Institute (ECADI), the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates PC (KPF), Architekten von Gerkan-Marg und Partner (GMP), Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP (SOM), Dominique Perrault Architect, Toyo Ito Associates Architects with the Graduate Centre of Architecture of Beijing University, and WDA Group. The companies had different architectural philosophies and design approaches. Nonetheless, they had one thing in common: they were all well-known in the international and local scene. The three Chinese firms were the largest in the country, and had experience of collaborating with foreign architects' offices on a number of 'new' landmark projects, such as the Beijing Henderson Centre, the Shanghai Grand Theatre, the Pudong Financial Tower of the Industrial & Commercial Bank of China, etc. With the exception of OMA, the others from outside mainland China had engaged in local projects to varying degrees. Wu Yaodong, a jury member, looked at the organisation and commented:

The ten design firms that attended the CCTV bid can be roughly divided into two categories: one was individual architects' offices, such as Koolhaas, Toyo Ito and Dominique Perrault; the other was the organisational architects' firms, such as the KPF and the SOM of America, the GMP of Germany, the CDG, the BIAD and the ECADI of China, and the design company of Hong Kong. [Those in] the first category had specific design philosophies. Their responses to the design brief were creative. [...Those in] the second category, because they were in the organisational type, had synthetic competence. [They were] efficient and more productive than creative. [Their] responses to the design brief were straightforward. [...] This comment does not intend to make a distinction [between] who is good and who is bad. For the new CCTV HQ, apart from the basic requirements of architecture, [it] should indeed have more expectations [placed on it] in other

respects.⁶⁶

Wu's comment implies two points. First, the organisation itself at least ensures an average standard that could be achieved architecturally and technically. Second, from the point of view of a Chinese juror and a Chinese architect, the new CCTV HQ would and ought to carry 'something' that would exceed what would be expected of a normal 'building'. This 'something else', which was initially defined as 'iconic' or 'symbolic', was central to the new CCTV HQ design bid.

Similar considerations were embedded in the organisation of the competition jury. During the days between the submission and the meetings of the jury, the tendering company and the staff of CCTV had checked the validity of the documents, the main economic and technical index and the basic utility of the proposals. On the first day of jury deliberation, Ding Wenhua, the Chief Engineer for CCTV, and the only juror from the client organisation, gave a brief introduction to the operation of a television station, – the function of each department, the relationship between them, the architectural requirements, contemporary solutions to problems used in Europe and Japan, etc. In the afternoon of the 20th, after all design firms finished their presentation and before the ballot started, a representative from CCTV made a brief report to the jury panel about their

⁶⁶ Wu, Yaodong (2003). “参与 CCTV 投标的十家设计单位，大致可以分为两类建筑师阵营：一类是个人建筑师事务所，有库哈斯、伊东丰雄和多米尼克·佩罗；一类是组织型建筑师事务所，有美国的 KPF、SOM，德国的 GMP，中国的建设部院、北京院和上海现代建筑设计集团，以及香港一家设计公司。第一类阵营有鲜明的设计思想，对设计任务书的应答也是创造性的。[...] 第二类阵营因为是组织型的，有综合实力，高效，生产性大于创造性，对设计任务书的解答也是一对一的。[...] 这样评论，并非想分出孰优孰劣。对中央电视台新总部大楼来讲，在其建筑基本需求之外，确实还应有更多其他方面的期待。”

opinions on each proposal, mainly on the issues of utility and technological feasibility. For CCTV, every proposal would be functionally feasible. The main task then left to the jurors seemed to be to choose a scheme that would be 'iconic' from the professional viewpoints of architecture and urban planning.

Inevitably, every juror would have a different understanding and judgement regarding what an 'iconic' building was and what the new CCTV HQ should or should not be, particularly with jury members being drawn from so many different backgrounds. The composition of the jury panel was a mixture of the international and the local, the theoretical and the practical, and involved architectural considerations as well as the administration of planning. Among those present, Charles Jencks was famous both in China and around the world for his theory of 'postmodernist' architecture. For him, because China had a very different culture and CCTV's programmes should represent different ideas from those in the USA, the building design of the new CCTV HQ should express creativity and particularity.

Arata Isozaki is a Japanese architect and theorist with an international reputation. His Tsukuba Centre Building in Japan was elected as one of the 'Ten Most Notable World Buildings of the 1980s' by Chinese architects in 1989.⁶⁷ Isozaki started to practice in China in 1993, when he was commissioned for the Mirage City project (unbuilt) in Zhuhai. Since then, he has

⁶⁷ This election has been mentioned in Section 1.2.2, pp. 70-71.

entered a number of competitions, including that for the National Grand Theatre, and his proposal, the Shenzhen Cultural Centre, was under construction at that very time. In regard to the new CCTV HQ, he thought that

everyone is saying that the building needs a symbolic meaning, i.e. it should be a symbolic building. I think here, rather than talking about the symbolic, could we instead talk of its embodiment [of the operation of the television station], [and] mainly focus on the strong effect that the embodiment creates?⁶⁸

Rocco Yim is one of the most eminent architects of Hong Kong, where he was trained, and where his practice is based. At the age of thirty-one, he won first prize for the L'Opera De la Bastille in Paris in 1983.⁶⁹ Since the 1980s, he started to be involved in a number of projects in China, such as the China Hilton Hotel, the Beijing Silver Tower, the Museum of Guangdong and so on. For him,

[first], it is undoubted that CCTV wants to seek a representative building. Second, the building [the new CCTV HQ] should have [a] vivid life in a long term.⁷⁰

Liu Kaiji from Beijing was the director of the panel. His practice started in 1950, and since 1953, he has been working at the Beijing Institute of Architectural Design. Apart from his practice, Liu takes an active part in professional organisations and in introducing architectural trends and theories into China. He was

⁶⁸ Arata Isozaki's words were translated from Chinese. There might be some 'mistranslations' in this second translation. But I hope that if there are 'mistranslations', they may be a demonstration of problems with which this thesis is concerned. "我认为大家一直说的建筑需要有一个象征意义,也就是说要做一个象征性建筑,我觉得在这里是不是可以不提象征性,而是讲它的具像性,主要评论它的具像性带来的巨大的力量。"

⁶⁹ There were three schemes in the shortlist of the international competition for the L'Opera De la Bastille. His proposal was not the final one to be built.

⁷⁰ "在我的感觉里, CCTV 是要做一个追求有代表性的建筑物,这是毫无疑问的。第二,建筑物的挑选应该有持续性的,是一个长期的建筑物,不能只看几眼就厌了、不好看了,而是要越看越好看,有含义,有自己的生命力,有代表性的建筑物就不是很容易挑。"

one of the initiators of the Association of Chinese Architects and was a Vice-President of the Architectural Society of China, as well as a Deputy Editor of the *Series of Foreign Architectural Theories* (1988-1990), and a member of the Editing Board of *Masterpieces of World Architecture in the Twentieth Century* (1999).⁷¹ In the 1980s, he played a role in introducing 'postmodernism' into China. For Liu, the new CCTV HQ should not just be a well-functioning building. It 'should be an iconic landmark [...] a cultural and public building in the CBD, [...] should generate meanings'. He said:

if we make the new CCTV HQ the same as other buildings, i.e. submerged in office buildings and hotels, no one would tell which one is the CCTV HQ. That will be not good.⁷²

Zhang Jinqiu is a recognised 'National Design Master' and a fellow of the Chinese Academy of Engineering. She was a student of Liang Sicheng in Tsinghua University in the 1950s, and participated in the construction of the Great Hall of the People. Since 1966, she has worked at the China Northwest Building Design Research Institute in Xi'an, and is famous for her Tang-style architecture that tries to 'explore contemporary possibilities for a traditional Chinese design language.'⁷³ (Fig. 4.1-12)



Fig. 4.1-12

Zhang thought that the new CCTV HQ should be 'distinctive and beautiful, and should have a certain symbolic significance', which did not mean a literal representation, but the 'ideas, meanings and

⁷¹ The *Series of Foreign Architectural Theories* (*guowai jianzhu lilun yicong*) (《国外建筑理论译丛》); The *Masterpieces of World Architecture in the Twentieth Century* (*20 shiji shijie jianzhu jingpinji*) (《20世纪世界建筑精品集》).

⁷² “首先最基础的是它能够运行，是一个功能比较好的建筑。再一个我希望它是标志性的建筑物。[...] 中央电视台将来是 CBD 区域里的一个文化建筑，一个群众性的建筑、公共性的建筑，[...] 我觉得要产生含义。”“假如我们把中央电视台做成跟别的建筑一样，就是在办公楼和旅馆里淹没了，看起来谁也不知道是中央电视台，就不好了。”

⁷³ Rowe, Peter G. and Kuan, Seng (2003). pp.176.

contents expressed through certain visualised figures'.⁷⁴

Wu Yaodong belongs to the generation who went through their architectural education in the Reform era. He is a professor and Vice-president of the Architectural Design & Research Institute of Tsinghua University. He was trained as an architect at Tsinghua University during the 1980s and acquired his doctoral degree in a joint programme organised by both Tsinghua University and the University of Tokyo. Thereafter, he did post-doctorial research on 'comparative studies of modern architectural development'. His design institute is the cooperative firm involved in Paul Andreu's National Grand Theatre project. For Wu, the task of choosing a proposal for the new CCTV HQ was not 'a matter of personal taste, but a responsibility for the state', i.e. the decision needed to be taken 'from a bigger and broader viewpoint'. He admitted that he had a 'Chinese complex' (*zhongguo qingjie*):

No matter how it is said, [it is] China's CCTV. I wish this building [to be] very harmonious. I do not want it [to be] ugly. It should be very harmonious and represent the state, and be accepted by Chinese people.⁷⁵

Ke Huangzhang and Chen Gang are authorities on the administration and planning of Beijing. Ke was the Deputy Director of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of City Planning and the President of Beijing Municipal Planning & Design, which

⁷⁴ “我们要有差异性、美学性，还要有意象的表达。”“这个意象[...]就是说它有一种内在的思想、内在的含义、内容，通过一定的形象反映出来。”

⁷⁵ “我觉得不是对自己的喜好负责，而是对自己的国家复杂，就是你是站在个人的好恶角度还是站在更大的宏观的角度。”“我自己有个情结，不管怎么说，中国的 CCTV，所以我有一个中国的情结，我希望这个房子很祥和，不希望很丑陋，它应该很祥和，是代表国家的，是中国人能够接受的。”

had been involved in the master plan for the Beijing CBD. He has been working in the field since the 1960s, and is the consultant for Beijing CBD's planning and construction. Regarding the new CCTV HQ, he agreed that

while it meets the requirements of function, it should have its own unique figure, strong character, and at least distinguished image from the ordinary office buildings, hotel or luxury apartment buildings in the CBD, and will have good effect on changing the identical spaces of the CBD.⁷⁶

Chen is the Director of the Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Planning, a government department in charge of planning administration of the city. He wished that the new CCTV HQ could provide an attractive and vivid space for the public in the CBD, and could represent a 'masterpiece' of design in the city:

Because Beijing is a place with an ancient and strong traditional Chinese character, in order to protect it, our planning has a strict control of the whole city, including the control of height. So, in some areas of Beijing, it is hard to find a creative building[s]. But in the CBD, I think, [we] should catch its character, launch a large-scale innovation, welcome the most trendy and avant-garde ideas, and make it a creative field for the masters. This is impossible in Tian'anmen Square, but it is possible in this area.⁷⁷

It seems impossible to draw a single description or picture from such diverse and 'abstract' objectives. One person's concern – such as Wu Xiudong's regard for the representation of the state

⁷⁶ “我也非常倾向于，它在满足功能使用要求的同时，尽可能选择有自己独特形象的，强烈个性的，至少区别于一般 CBD 里的写字楼、酒店或者高档公寓的形象，改变 CBD 这样非常雷同的空间，它会起到很好的作用。”

⁷⁷ “因为北京是一个古老的、具有浓厚的中国传统特色的地方，为了保护好这个地方，我们规划上对整个北京城进行严格的控制，包括高度的控制。所以在北京城的一些地方我们很难见到有创意的建筑。但是 CBD，我觉得应该抓住它的特征，大范围的城市创新，期待世界上最潮流、最前卫的思想和做法，可以成为一个大师的创作园地。在天安门广场上不可以，在这个区域里可以。” Chen's idea was echoed by Ke Huanzhang and Zhang Jinqui. Ke once said after the Competition Jury, 'Beijing's buildings, as seen by many professionals and non-professionals, are not as diverse and characteristic as Shanghai's. Beijing's are boring. Especially in the CBD, I hope the new CCTV HQ could break this situation.' Ke, Huanzhang (2003).

— might not be another's care, — such as Isozaki's suggestion. Even the ones who agreed with Wu's idea may not have shared the same interpretation. However, what seems to be commonly agreed is that the new CCTV HQ should have a form that would 'distinguish' itself from the surrounding buildings, including those that were not yet built or even designed. We will come back to the question of how the 'environment of the future' was conceived at the end of this section.

In the context of contemporary Chinese architecture, this kind of distinction between architectural forms is often misinterpreted as an attempt to represent 'cultural differences'. In the design bid for the new CCTV HQ, some people characterised Toyo Ito's proposal as 'eastern', and the OMA's 'western'. Ito's scheme came out of his collaboration with Yung Ho Chang — a leading figure of the younger generation of Chinese architects. Their scheme proposed a round 'low-rise' complex, with two towers 100 metres high⁷⁸ (Fig. 4.1-13). The main body of the complex was only six storeys high and created a 'horizontal' scene. A 'sky garden', 300 metres in diameter, was placed on the top and lent the most characteristic feature to the scheme. The idea behind it was based upon two analyses: the horizontal relationship between the different departments of a television station was more convenient than the 'vertical circulation'; and a high-rise building could not be a new 'symbol' amid the high-rise forest of Beijing's CBD.⁷⁹ These two considerations —

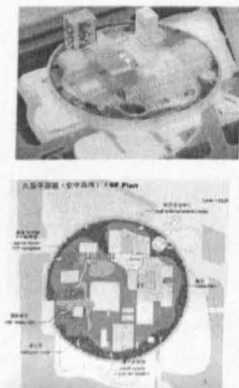


Fig. 4.1-13

⁷⁸ In technical terms, according to the regulation of the state, Toyo Ito's scheme was not a real 'low-rise' complex, which height should be less than 24 metres.

⁷⁹ Matsubara, Hironori (2003).

operational efficiency and the distinguished figure of the building – were not different from OMA's. But Ito and Chang's analysis led to the opposite understanding and gave rise to different solutions to the problems. Certainly, this understanding and the proposed solutions involved personal interests and cultural backgrounds. But the differences between the two proposals are not a representation of a 'cultural difference' between the 'eastern' and the 'western'. Rather, they just articulate different architectural approaches to the same project.

To identify Ito's proposal as being 'eastern' does not seem to be an issue of relating to the construction culture in the 'east' – the concept of the 'east' is problematic anyway –, but instead from 'comparison', i.e. a formal 'comparison' with other buildings. Liu Kaiji admitted that the OMA's submission was not his first choice, but Ito's was:

Rem Koolhaas's proposal is very avant-garde, very explicit, like those western buildings. Ito's low-rise design is also very good. Thus in the CBD, an area full of such tall buildings, other [companies] will not do this kind of design. Only CCTV has the opportunity to make a low-rise building complex. Therefore, if completed according to this proposal, [the new CCTV HQ] will be a landmark too. Moreover, a very important factor is that I think Toyo Ito's design has a more Oriental flavour.⁸⁰

Wu Yaodong shared similar ideas:

I like Toyo Ito [’s proposal]. There are not many CBDs in the world. I am wondering if they could be in low density. Toyo Ito proposes a new idea. His design is just 100 metres high, not super tall. And his proposal is very good for horizontal circulation and is very

⁸⁰ Li, Honggu and Jin, Yan (2003). “库哈斯的方案很前卫，很明确，像西方的那些建筑；伊东丰雄的矮楼做得很好，所以在 CBD 这样一个高楼林立的地方，别人也不会做这种设计，只有中央电视台有机会做矮楼，所以按这个方案建成后也会是一个地标。另外很重要的一点是，我觉得伊东丰雄的设计更有东方味道，我是比较保守的人，我不知道特别前卫了群众和各个部门能不能接受。”

practical in technical terms. Especially because of his architectural concept – its Oriental and pastoral style - it is to my mind the best.⁸¹

It seems that from the points of view of Liu and Wu, what was identified with the 'Oriental' was the 'horizontal arrangement'. If it is true, the 'horizontal arrangement' is not peculiar in the 'east', but generally a characteristic of the 'ancient' construction in many places. Indeed, the 'horizontal character' of Ito's proposal was largely identified by its contrast with the surrounding high-rise or super high-rise buildings, and the other proposals in the design bid. In physical terms, the massive six-storey building complex proposed by Ito and Chang is neither traditionally Japanese nor traditionally Chinese, but indeed 'modern'.

Although Liu and Wu preferred Toyo Ito's proposal, they were not opponents of the OMA's. On the contrary, they thought that both designs would be equally 'distinguished' from other buildings in the Beijing CBD and other CBDs, and would create a new 'identity' for this area. Liu Kaiji once defended OMA's scheme in the following way:

[...] I think that Koolhaas's work contrasts with the environment [context] and also reconstructs it by its own impressive figure. For instance, in the CBD, [there will be] many companies and many buildings. It [the district] could be a bit chaotic. With Koolhaas's work, it will create a new place and will reconstruct the environment. We are now very concerned about the concept of 'place', which means to have a specific location. Take the new triumphal arch in Paris as an example. In fact, the area of La Défense is a bit like the Beijing CBD. Because of its presence, the

⁸¹ Ibid. “我喜欢伊东丰雄。CBD 中央商务区，在全世界并不是很多，我想可不可以是低密度的，伊东丰雄提出了新的想法，他的设计只有 100 米高，不是超高层。而且，他的方案对水平流动很好，在工艺上很合理，特别是他的建筑理念——东方式的、田园般的。在我这里，他是排名第一位的。”



Fig. 4.1-14

environment [of the area] is reconstructed.⁸²

Two related points are significant in this analogy made by Liu Kaiji, and indeed in relation to other jurors' opinions mentioned above. The first concerns the location of the new CCTV HQ – the construction of the Beijing CBD. As Liu's comment indicated, the CBD could be one of the 'universal' forms in contemporary cities all over the world, in terms of its purpose, valuation, planning strategies, infrastructure, programmes, construction technologies and building materials. The character of one CBD is often defined by its identification with others (such as the Beijing CBD with the area of La Défense). (Fig. 4.1-14) It is because of this identification that the 'environment' of the Beijing CBD in the future was conceived, and hence became an imaginary context, to which the new CCTV HQ would respond and from which it would be distinguished. This would link to the second point – the visual effect that a landmark building tries to pursue. Usually accompanied with the attempt to represent the 'new' development of the city, this pursuit is supposed to produce an image in contrast to the 'old' city, and to be identified for this area. This effect is not so much associated with the building programme itself, but with the visual recognition, which is often defined by the form of the building, such as the Grande Arche in La Défense and the decision of the new CCTV HQ. It seems that it was at these two points that the jurors from different cultural and political

⁸² Liu, Kaiji (2003). "[...]我认为库哈斯的作品是以自身的强烈形象，既与环境对比，又重组环境。比如在 CBD，众多公司众多建筑，可能会比较乱，有了库哈斯这个作品，又创造了一个新的场所，把环境重新组织起来。我们现在都很重视“场所”的概念，就是要有一个特定的地方。比如说巴黎的那个新凯旋门，其实拉·德方斯那个地方有点像北京的 CBD，也是因为它的出现进行了环境重组。”



Fig. 4.1-15

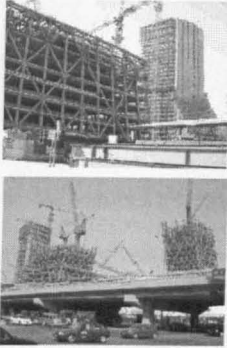


Fig. 4.1-16

backgrounds could come to terms with OMA's proposal, and both Koolhaas's and Ito's proposals could be regarded as equally 'distinguished'.⁸³ (Fig. 4.1-15, 16)

In this section, we have examined how the production of the new CCTV HQ was organised, in regard to political purposes, design strategies and approaches and the arrangement of the competition jury. Our examination tried to demonstrate two points. First, in terms of architectural forms and design process, OMA's proposal might be 'new' in the context of Chinese architecture. But in terms of a correspondence with the political demands that initiated the building project, it was not 'avant-garde'. Rather, it conformed to and served as a device to represent the power of the state, to carry out the political control of the government, and to shape the unified 'views' of Chinese people. In this sense, the new CCTV HQ project continued the practice of Chinese architecture throughout the twentieth century, and did not place an opposition to instrumentality of architecture in the Chinese tradition.

Second, the new CCTV HQ is not something 'western' or representative of a process of the 'westernisation' of Chinese architecture. Rather, it emerged from collaboration between international involvement and local considerations. The parties – the state, CCTV, Koolhaas, and the experts of the jury – who were involved in its production, may have different views,

⁸³ Our assumption is that, although the current architectural discussions try to avoid the issue of formal judgement of a building, its effect seems to be still at work, particularly in the design bid for a significant building like the new CCTV HQ or Sydney Opera House.

interests and ideas, and may not hold the same ideological position and understanding of the 'meanings' that the building would connote. But they could reach a common point that the new CCTV HQ should be visually distinguished and programmatically workable. This common regard might be coincidental when addressing a single project. However, for our argument of this thesis, it occurred on the conditions of modernity. To choose Koolhaas was not a matter of choosing to be 'western', but rather a design proposal that could discursively meet the requirements from different considerations. In addition, both the Harvard Research Project on the PRD and the OMA's proposal involved the participation of some Chinese architects, such as Ma Qingyun, Zhu Yimin, Wu Zhaohui, etc. Therefore, the new CCTV HQ project is not something 'European' or 'western', but rather 'trans-national'.

4.2 Reflection: 'Is China an Experimental Field of Foreign Architects'?

In the last section, we tried to show that the new CCTV HQ was not so much a result of the influence of 'European' architecture upon China, but rather a trans-national practice that corresponded to the nature of the CCTV project. In this section, we will examine the debate that has been provoked by both OMA's proposal and those of other international practices that have occurred in China over the last few years. The nature and essence of this debate is encapsulated in the assertion that 'China has become an experimental field for foreign architects'.

As the last section of the thesis, this debate will also reflect the entire discussion presented so far – the conceptual 'translation' of 'western modern' architecture into the context of contemporary China. Our previous analysis argued that while the formation and development of modern Chinese architecture was sustained by waves of importation from European and American architecture throughout the twentieth century up to the present day, this importation was translated on the basis of the systematic 'misreadings' due to the local conditions – historical and cultural interpretations, social realities, as well as administrative purposes, political strategies, and financial systems. Compared with European and American architecture, a difference can be characterised by the absence of a coherent 'modernism' in China and the continuity of the modified 'Beaux-Arts' practice in the history of twentieth century Chinese architecture. We argued that to assume a 'westernisation' of Chinese architecture and cities in the last three decades is to give a misleading account of the whole situation, because there is no such a thing as a totality of 'Chinese' architecture to oppose to 'western' architecture, but rather architecture conceived as a modern practice taking place under Chinese national conditions.

One may wonder whether the 'misreadings' are still at work in the contemporary architectural scene, since Chinese architecture is becoming more open to the international world

with the result that international collaboration is more frequent and complex than ever before. Indeed, since China entered the WTO in 2001 and Beijing won the right to host the 2008 Olympics, international involvement in architectural practice, city construction, research projects and workshop-based design courses has dramatically increased. Information about architectural events and activities all over the world is more readily accessible to Chinese readers than ever before.

Nevertheless, insofar as Chinese architects are trained – or at least receive their initial training in China – and are working within a context that has its own 'past', concerns and concepts, the effect of the 'misreading' of 'imports' does not seem to have washed away spontaneously. On the contrary, understanding the 'conceptual translation' of the 'imports' has become urgent, since the priority given to the differentiation between the 'western' and the 'Chinese' has obstructed the ability of Chinese architects to discern and identify the imports and to understand the architectural issues involved in the process. In order to understand the situation, we will examine three aspects of the debate: the conditions under which the debate emerged and was initiated and the problem of being 'modern'; the introduction of Koolhaas's architectural practice and theories and the 'western modern' now; and the promotion of 'cultural identity' in regard to the re-identification of the status of the architectural profession and of Chinese architects in society.

4.2.1 Emergence of the Debate: The Problem of Being 'Modern'

The question of whether 'China was becoming an experimental field for foreign architects' was first raised in public by Wu Chen in his criticism of Paul Andreu's proposal for the National Grand Theatre and Koolhaas's proposal for the new CCTV HQ. For him, the former was incompatible with Beijing's urban fabric, and the latter did 'not bring anything else other than shock'. Nevertheless, China was paying billions of *yuan* for them to design projects that they had not experienced before:

In general, China is experiencing a very bad phenomenon: while losing its character, every city wants to build buildings like urban sculptures, which seem to have a tendency to mushroom everywhere. [...] It is worth mentioning that in Europe the control of urban planning and preservation is quite strict. [...] Architects can only play with a small number of buildings. But it seems that China is offering the chance that foreign architects cannot have in their own countries.⁸⁴

From his point of view, this was a phenomenon of 'self-conscious colonisation' in architecture,⁸⁵ because

by nature, western ideology is unilateral, its architecture also intends to export its own culture, and [the exportation] is compelling.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Wu, Chen (2003). "总的来看，中国有一种非常不好的现象：在丧失城市特色的同时，到处都要建造城市雕塑式的建筑物，似乎有遍地开花的趋势，也许只能用社会心理的浮躁来解释这种现象。[...]值得一提的是，在欧洲，对城市规划、城市保护是控制得比较严的，[...]只有一小部分建筑可以让建筑师这样玩。但是似乎中国正在提供这样一种外国建筑师在自己国家都得不到的机会。"

Wu Chen was first trained in China in the 1980s and studied for his Diploma and M. Arch at the Westminster University in London from 1995 to 1998. He is currently working at the Terry Farrell & Partners and is responsible for the business of the office in China. Wu Chen's father, Wu Liangyong, 'has been a leading figure in the department of architecture at Tsinghua University' and a 'fellow of the Chinese Academy of Science and of Chinese Academy of Engineering'. The brief profile of Wu Liangyong's career sees: Rowe, Peter G. and Kuan, Seng (2003). pp. 266.

⁸⁵ The phrase was later used in his another article '*Beware the Spread of Colonisation and Self-conscious Colonisation in Architecture*'. Wu, Chen (2004).

⁸⁶ Wu, Chen (2003). "本质上，西方的意识形态是单边化的，它的建筑也是要输出自己的文化，是带有强迫性的。"

For Wang Mingxian, the idea that 'China was becoming an experimental field for foreign architects' was not a question, but a fact. Nevertheless, he thought that two aspects to this phenomenon should be distinguished:

At the present, a majority of the foreign architectural offices that come to China are commercial. Their main aim is not to do good design, but to make money. For this, they do not mind employing various ways of catering for Chinese clients. What they can leave to contemporary Chinese architecture is pretty much in doubt.

[...]

I personally think that if there are serious experiments, then it is not frightened for [China] to become an experimental field for foreign architects. The works of the top-ranking architects in the world, such as Koolhaas, Herzog and de Meuron, Isozaki ... can bequeath new cultural memories to the history of contemporary Chinese architecture. What is frightened is to make Beijing into a commercial city for [the purposes of] marketing.⁸⁷

The differences between the points raised by Wu Chen and Wang Mingxian might be easily accounted for in terms of the resistance to and openness to international practice. Nonetheless, the actual situation seems to be more complex. In Wu's criticism, the object of the resistance was obscure. At the political level, as our previous analysis showed, what was really involved in the projects was not a question of 'western' or 'non-western' ideology, but a political strategy aimed at reinforcing the power of the Chinese government and solidifying the nation-state. At the architectural level, what it was that was 'colonised' or was not was unclear. Insofar as he agreed that importation was necessary to the development of Chinese architecture, the

⁸⁷ Zhang, Jie Ibid. "现在进入中国的大量的商业性事务所，他们最主要的目的不是为了把设计做好，而是为了把钱挣到。为了这个就不惜利用各种手段讨好中国的业主。他们能为中国当代建筑留下什么东西是很值得怀疑的。

[...]

我个人认为，如果是很严肃的建筑试验，那么作为外国建筑师的试验场并不可怕，如库哈斯、赫尔佐格与德梅隆、矶崎新……这些世界一流的建筑师的作品，能为中国当代建筑史留下新的文化记忆。可怕的是把北京作为商业性的城市来炒作。”

extent to which the 'self-conscious colonisation' could be identified was completely vague. In Wang's comment, his acceptance of the practice of foreign architects was conditional. Ultimately, the question for them was not whether or not Chinese architecture should be open to international practice, but rather about what architecture and architects stood for.

Above all, we have to be aware that the practice of foreign architects in China did not seem to be very problematic until the late 1990s. From a historical point of view, the 'modern' form of architectural practice started with the work of foreign architects – mostly European and American architects – in the late nineteenth century. From then to the late 1930s, they contributed to the construction of 'new' and 'modern' cities, such as the Shanghai Bund, the master plan for the Capital in Nanjing, etc., as well as the emergence of new building types, such as hotels, banks and universities.⁸⁸ But they also contributed to the formation of 'Chinese characteristic' architecture, such as the 'Chinese style' buildings designed by Harry H. Hussey, Henry K. Murphy and V. Leith-Moller; and to the introduction of 'new' modes of construction.⁸⁹ In the 1950s, when the practices of 'western' architects were suppressed, Soviet architects and experts were invited to help the planning and construction of 'new' industrial cities, and to exemplify the creation of 'socialist content, national form' in architecture.⁹⁰ In the early 1980s when the country reopened to the world, a

⁸⁸ See: 'hotel', pp.240.

⁸⁹ See: Section 2.1.3, pp.129-131.

⁹⁰ See: Section 1.2.2, pp. 64.

number of architects from outside China were commissioned to undertake projects – mainly hotels hosting foreigners – in the major cities. Since the early 1990s, foreign architects' offices increasingly involved in the design market of China and a range of projects, from master plan, urban design and landscape design, to office buildings, 'luxury' housing, public edifices, etc. Although their works may not be always applauded, some of them were indeed acknowledged, such as the Fragrant Hill Hotel by I. M. Pei in 1982 and the Jin Mao Tower by SOM in Shanghai in 1998,⁹¹ both of which were appreciated as examples of the successful combination of the 'modern' with Chinese 'tradition'.

Even now, to many Chinese architects, importing designs by foreign architects is a direct way of learning 'new' and 'advanced' things. In the commentary *What Does Koolhaas Bring to Us?* Wu Danhua, an architectural journalist from the *Construction Times*, expressed this expectation typically:

For a long time, domestic architectural design has been weak in the theoretical field. Confined to conventional architectural theories, [this situation] makes it difficult for many domestic architects to achieve a breakthrough, and eventually makes them lose the vitality and willingness to do so, when shaping and integrating architectural space. Choosing Koolhaas's 'distorted monster' is indeed to choose the new ideas and a new understanding of architecture that he brings from outside China, and is a stimulation to our creative thinking that has been absent for a long time.⁹²

Thus, if the practice of foreign architects was expected to stand

⁹¹ See: Section 2.1.3, pp. 152-153, pp.155. Fig. 2.1-26 and Fig. 2.1-27.

⁹² Wu, Danhua (2003). “长久以来，国内建筑设计在理论领域始终处于弱势地位的现状，使得国内许多建筑师在建筑空间的塑造和整合过程中，因囿于传统的建筑理论而难以实现突破，并最终丧失锐气、不愿突破。选择库哈斯这个‘扭动的怪物’，其实选择的是他从国外带来的新的观念和对建筑的新的认识和理解，是给我们久已荒废的创造思维的一次触动。”

for things 'new', what it was associated with and how the 'new' was perceived were important in the debate.

One might think that the debate started simply because of the increasing involvement of foreign architects in the design market in China. But the amount of work undertaken was not the crucial point. In the case of Beijing, the floor area designed by foreign architects' offices in the 1990s was more than 4,000,000 square metres. 80 percent of the projects were the larger ones with more than 100,000 square metres floor area.⁹³ Foreign architects accounted for only a small percentage of the 83,818,000 square metres floor area of new construction in Beijing from 1991 to 2000⁹⁴. The real issue was not the 'volume', but the 'significance' of the projects that the foreign architects undertook.

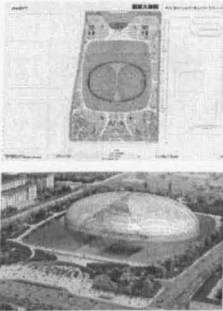


Fig. 4.2-1

The current dispute was triggered by French architect Paul Andreu's proposal for the National Grand Theatre in Beijing at the end of the 1990s.⁹⁵ (Fig. 4.2-1) It climaxed when a series of

⁹³ Wang, Yin (2003a). "以北京为例, 1990年代境外设计项目有20多个, 400多万平方米, 其中80%是10万平方米以上的大型项目。"

⁹⁴ Beijing, Statistics Bureau (2007). Table 5-5, Statistics of Real Estate Development (1990-2006).

⁹⁵ The National Grand Theatre, next to the Tian'anmen square and the Great Hall of the People, was sponsored by the Central Government. It was initially planned as one of the Ten Grand Projects in 1958, and was halted due to financial shortage. Forty years later, in 1998, the Central Government decided to recommence it with the renewed programme. Occupying 7.61 hectares land, the current project would offer 149,520 square metres floor areas and contain three halls – a 2,500-seat opera house, a 2,000-seat music hall, a 1,200-seat theatre – and a smaller auditorium. The estimated budget was 26.88 billion yuan. At the time when it was designed, it was the largest public building in Reform China. Peter Rowe and Seng Kuan commented, 'It is clearly intended to leave the mark of the present political regime on the nation's administrative center [sic].' Rowe, Peter G. and Kuan, Seng (2003). pp. 194.

Paul Andreu won the commission via two-round design bids, which were the first international competition held by the Central Government since 1949. The international competition started in April 1998, and went through two rounds and three times revision. The whole process took one year and four months. 32 of the total 69 submitted schemes were from domestic architectural firms (including those from Hong Kong) and 37 from foreign architectural firms. The construction commenced in 2001, and the construction design was collaborated with Tsinghua University. The Theatre was opened to public at the end of 2007, and is renamed as the National Centre for the Performing Arts. As the thesis focuses on

Olympic-related projects, such as the new CCTV HQ, the National Stadium, etc., were commissioned to the European architects at the beginning of this century. These projects had a number of common features. They were all monumental buildings that were constructed on a large scale and sponsored by the Central Government or its agencies to project a 'new' image of the country and its culture. They had distinct forms and were designed by European architectural offices. Furthermore, since they were built in the capital Beijing, they were expected to make 'new' contributions to the process of modernisation of the city, and to the development of Chinese architecture in general. For instance, the client committee of the National Grand Theatre declared:

...the shape of the building was avant-garde and novel, and would bring a positive effect on the renovation of Tian'anmen Square and the Changan Avenue and the innovation of architectural design in Beijing and the whole country. It would be a milestone of our country's cultural buildings during a certain historical period.⁹⁶

This tone was repeated in official announcements of other national projects. But we can understand that the greater the significance attached to the projects, the more some Chinese architects would feel eliminated in their authority to represent the 'modern' image of the nation, an authority that they had possessed in the past.

The construction of the national projects was obviously not simply an architectural activity, but a public event. In July of

the dispute before it was completed, I keep using the name, the National Grand Theatre, in the dispute.

⁹⁶ Wang, Zhili (2000). "业主委员会认为它的造型前卫、新颖，对天安门广场及长安街的改造、对北京乃至全国的建筑设计创新，将产生积极的影响。将成为我国一定历史时期文化建筑的里程碑。"

1999, before the final decision was reached, the exhibition of the entries for the competition of the National Grand Theatre was held at the Museum of Chinese History next to Tian'anmen Square, and attracted more than 40,000 visits. In the case of the new CCTV HQ, the news that Koolhaas's proposal won the competition was widely circulated. In 2003, after CCTV and OMA signed the design contract in December 2002, not only the architectural journals, such as the *Time + Architecture* and *New Architecture*, but also a number of publications, such as the *Sanlian Life Weekly*, *Nanfang Weekend* and *Beijing Youth Daily*, ran special issues on it. 'Architecture' was brought into a public spotlight in relation to public issues – the Beijing Olympics, the 'new' image of China, the transformation of the city or cities, etc. Under these circumstances, the response of Chinese architects to the proposals was not simply to provide professional judgement, but also to contribute to the formation of certain values in society, a concern we see in both Wu Chen's and Wang Mingxian's comments.

One reason why these projects caught the public's attention was the rapid transformation of Chinese cities over the last twenty years. On the level of 'image', the proposals by the European architects projected this transformation both in terms of the present and the potential direction for the future. The observation of Huang Maojun, a journalist from Beijing, was typical:

A huge 'frame' building will co-exist with the Harmony Palace, the Tian'anmen, the Forbidden City and the Bell and Drum Towers in its alien posture, which is the recently published appearance of the



Fig. 4.2-2

new CCTV HQ. (Fig. 4.2-2)

[...]

Because she is not close to the borders [of the country], and because she is not close to the sea, Beijing was luckily not touched by colonisation – as Harbin, Qingdao and Shanghai [were] – and the characteristics of the city keeps the Chinese manner intact.

[...]

From the present perspective, this original ecology⁹⁷ of Beijing seems to be an obstacle to the process of globalisation of the city.

We notice that when Beijing time and again chooses some 'postmodernist' buildings, the four-sided courtyard house, which was the mainstream of the city, is facing an unprecedented challenge.

[...]

While small houses are demolished to put up high-rise buildings, **unexpectedly**, the buildings about to be built will be 'avant-garde', one more than another, such as the 'distorted frame' etc. The designers are all Europeans. The western architects are expanding the boundary of their imagination to the utmost in Beijing.⁹⁸

Two points are worth highlighting. First, the paradox in which traditional buildings were demolished and 'postmodernist' ones were put up manifests that 'postmodernism' and the 'avant-garde' are both 'modern' constructs, whereas they are based upon opposite perspectives on 'history' and organised systems. Second, the spontaneous rejection of the 'avant-garde' buildings was not because they were identified as 'western' or with European architects, but rather that they were unable to be identified in terms of familiar references. The shift in tone marked by the word 'unexpectedly' exposes an ambivalence

⁹⁷ original ecology (*yuan shengtai*) (原生态)

⁹⁸ Huang, Maojun (2003). "一个巨大“方框”建筑以异类的姿态与祈年殿、天安门、紫禁城和钟鼓楼共生——这是最近公布的CCTV新办公大楼的样子。

[...]

由于她的不靠边，由于她的不近海，北京幸运地没有被殖民化染指——比如哈尔滨，比如青岛与上海——她的城市特质完整地保持着中国的风味。

[...]

现在看来，北京的这段原生态似乎已成为这座城市全球化进程的“路障”。

我们注意到，就在北京一而再、再而三地选择兴建一些“后现代”建筑的同时，曾经是座城市主流的四合院正遭受前所未有的挑战。

[...]

平了小屋盖高楼，可谁也没想到要盖的楼一栋比一栋“前卫”，“扭曲的方框”等等，设计者居然全是欧洲人，西方的建筑设计师正在北京最大限度地拓展他们的想象边际。”

between the desire for the 'new' and the 'shock' aroused in the unprepared. This experience of 'shock' was not peculiar. Readers may remember that Leo Ou-fan Lee depicted 'a typical pattern of shock, wonder, admiration, and imitation' when the Shanghai natives encountered the 'new' matter imported from the 'west' at the turn of the twentieth century.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, after one hundred years modernisation, the 'new' was more self-consciously and locally pursued and driven by a desire to move away from the past and look to the future that could be identified at a number of different levels, from the political agenda to market strategy and even at the level of the ordinary people. In other words, the real question here is not about being 'western' or 'non-western', but rather how to be 'modern'.

4.2.2 The 'Western Modern' Now

To be 'modern' would inevitably relate to how the 'new' imports were perceived and conceived. In the debate, 'avant-garde' was used to describe Paul Andreu's National Grand Theatre, Koolhaas's new CCTV HQ, Herzog and de Meuron's National Stadium, and the like. In terms of Huang Manjun's comment, no matter how these buildings might be categorised in the 'west', they were first of all perceived in opposition to traditional Chinese constructions, which was the way the 'western modern' was accounted for. However, what he did not clearly address was the relationship between the 'postmodernist' buildings and the 'avant-garde' ones. Our question, therefore, becomes: how was the 'avant-garde' and its relationship to the previous

⁹⁹ See: Section 1.2.1, pp.51.

imports understood?

Take the introduction of Koolhaas' practice and theory as an example. In China, Koolhaas was regarded as an 'avant-garde' architect who represented and led the direction of contemporary 'western' architecture. Zhu Yiming, a graduate of the Berlage Institute and one of the Chinese consultants for OMA's new CCTV HQ proposal, once commented:

Koolhaas's architectural and urban theories spread over the world along with the publication of the book *S, M, L, XL* in the mid-1990s. Ten years on, Koolhaas has now become the most influential architect in architecture. Because of his influence, general interest in urbanism is formed. In architecture, the traditional theories based upon formal aesthetics give way to pragmatism which pursues the combination of specialised knowledge and social requirements. To be precise, Koolhaas has become an architectural phenomenon. After the 1960s, there is no architect who has so deeply influenced and changed the direction of development of architecture and urbanism by his own effort as Koolhaas has.¹⁰⁰

If this comment reflected Zhu's own valuation, the descriptions in the public media reflected a more general picture of Koolhaas: 'a leading master who walks at the front of new modern architecture in the contemporary world'.¹⁰¹

In western architecture, Koolhaas was commonly regarded as a thoughtful and critical architect, a master who overthrew architectural tradition of Europe, and a star who is living at the peak of honour.¹⁰²

Nonetheless, the introduction of his practice and theory was

¹⁰⁰ Zhu, Yimin (2005a). pp. 33. "库哈斯的建筑与城市理论在1990年代中期随着那本《小、中、大、超大》的出版，在世界范围内传播。10年以后的今天，他已经成为建筑界最有影响力的建筑师。由于他的影响形成了普遍的对城市研究的兴趣。在建筑学中，传统的以形式美学为基础的理论让位于实用主义的对专业知识和社会需要相结合的追求。确切地说，库哈斯已经成为一种建筑现象。在1960年代之后，还没有哪一个建筑师能像他这样，以一个人的努力如此深地影响和改变了建筑学和城市理论的发展方向。"

¹⁰¹ Zeng, Han (2004). The article was originally published in the magazine *City Pictorial*.

¹⁰² Wang, Yin (2003b). "在西方建筑界，库哈斯是公认的有思想，有批判性的建筑师，是颠覆欧洲建筑传统的大师，是生活在名誉顶峰的明星。"

'fragmented' and practical, and largely based upon Chinese interpretations.

Translation of Koolhaas's work basically started in 2000, after he won the Pritzker Architecture Prize. The first translation regarding his architectural ideas was the interview, *From Bauhaus to Koolhaas* by Katrina Heron, and was posted on the ABBS website in 2001.¹⁰³ In 2003, after he won the new CCTV HQ project, his three essays, *Bigness*, *Generic City* and *Junk Space*, were translated and published in the special issue of *World Architecture* concerning OMA – the first collection of OMA's works published in China.¹⁰⁴ In the same year, the second edition of *Rem Koolhaas: Conversations with Students*, originally published in 1996, was issued in both Chinese and English. In 2004, some parts of *Delirious New York*, such as the 'Manifesto' 'Ecstasy' and 'Density' from the Introduction, 'Definitive Instability' and the 'City of the Captive Globe', and 22 out of 72 'copyrighted' words from the *Great Leap Forward* were translated and published in the book *Brimming City*.¹⁰⁵ However, by the end of 2007, none of his books had been wholly translated and published. The translation sequence might be accidental to some extent. But two underlying drives are worthy of remark. First, it was driven by an eagerness to keep pace with the 'newest' trend(s) in Europe and the USA, just as the introduction of 'postmodernism' and Deconstructive architecture had been in the 1980s and 1990s. Second, the conclusions that

¹⁰³ The original text was published in *Wired* 4.07, July 1996.

¹⁰⁴ The essays *Bigness* and *Junk Space* were translated by Jiang Jun, and the *Generic City* by Wang Qun. *World Architecture (Beijing)* 152(02/2003).

¹⁰⁵ The parts of the *Delirious New York* were translated by Jiahao and He Ru, and the 'copyrighted' words from the *Great Leap Forward* were translated by He Ru. Jiang, Yuanlun and Shi, Jian (2004).

had been reached in the works were favoured above the process of analysis.¹⁰⁶

Koolhaas had first been introduced into China as a Deconstructive architect in the late 1980s, when he joined the *Deconstructivist Architecture* exhibition organised by Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley at the MoMA in 1988, ten years after *Delirious New York* was published. Yet, the introduction of his architecture then was brief and was less than those of Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry and Daniel Libeskind. The first overview of his architectural theory and practice could be seen in Lu Xiangdong's article, *The Follower of Modernism – Introduction of Rem Koolhaas and His OMA*, which was published in 1993 – two years before the *S, M, L, XL* came out. The year 1993 was also the time when 'postmodernism' was widely suspected and the introduction of Deconstructive architecture began to be eclipsed. Lu's article was part of the search for a 'new' direction:

Postmodernists' citation and collage of historical symbols make mean that their works very quickly please the public with claptrap, and yet become rigid. It is easy to show that this is Graves's, that is Moore's, that is Venturi's ... and they are easy to imitate. This simply shows the superficiality of postmodernists. On the contrary, OMA's work does not have a particularly formal language, and is not living alongside adopted historical styles. Their work derives from deep analysis of the project itself, and does not have any predominant form, but only the faith of modernism. Apparently, this is much deeper! Very few people think that OMA's work is easy to imitate.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ One may think of a certain effect that Koolhaas's publications have had on diagrammatic presentation, graphic design and photographic perspective in China. I do not deny certain effects on ways of observing and presenting the 'realities', and even on aesthetics. But I reserve my point: from my point of view, they were largely used as tools of representation rather than tools of analysis.

¹⁰⁷ Lu, Xiangdong (1993), pp.96. "后现代主义者对历史符号的引用、拼凑,使他们的作品很快哗众取宠,也很快走向僵化。人们可以易如反掌地辨认出这是格雷夫斯的,那是摩尔的,那是文丘里的,那是……,而且他们也很容易被模仿,这也恰恰说明了这些后现代主义者的浅薄。OMA

Clearly, Lu's intention was not to look back at the development of 'neo-modernism' and the relationship between 'modernism' and 'postmodernism', but instead to look forward to something 'new' coming after 'postmodernism'. Although his criticism of formal imitation of 'postmodernism' called upon the 'deep analysis of the project itself', he did not seem to distinguish 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' as two organised categories opposed to each other:

The stake of OMA's these characters is that they ignore architectural form. [...] Indeed, OMA should find some balancing points from 'postmodernism'.¹⁰⁸

Koolhaas became known since he was awarded the Pritzker Prize in 2000, and was widely acknowledged after taking part in the competition for the new CCTV HQ. Since then, a number of articles have been published in regard to his architectural ideas and his proposal for the new CCTV HQ. Although he was generally reckoned as a descendant of 'modernism', the main interest of the Chinese architects was more in 'new' ideas and design methods that could give rise to 'new' building forms than historical sequences and contexts. The special issue of *World Architecture (Beijing)* only selected OMA's works after 1995, and *A+U* just focused on the new CCTV HQ project. They both were practice-oriented, and focused on 'contemporary' things. So was the edited book, *The Works and Thoughts of Rem*

的作品则相反，它没有固定的形式语言，也不是靠套用历史样式过活，他们的作品来源于对作品本身深刻的分析，并不存在什么先验的程式化的形式。只有执着的现代主义信念，这显然要深刻得多！很少有人认为 OMA 的作品是易学的。”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. pp.96. “OMA 的这些特点带来的危险恰恰是他们对于建筑形式的忽略，[...] 确实 OMA 应该从‘后现代主义’那里找一些平衡点。”

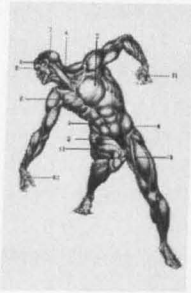


Fig. 4.2-3

Koolhaas, issued by China Electric Power Press in 2005.

The political, cultural and architectural activities that had influenced Koolhaas's architectural ideas and strategies were not unfolded until the second half of 2005 when Zhu Yimin published the essay 'Koolhaas in 1960s and 1970s'.¹⁰⁹ (Fig. 4.2-3) Nonetheless, there were two problems concerned with the Chinese context. First, the political situation in 1960s Europe and the architectural activities and figures that Zhu mentioned in his essay, such as Archigram, Archizoom, Super Studio, Andrea Branzi and Oswald M. Ungers, were not familiar to Chinese readers.¹¹⁰ Second, as Zhu's essay focused on formation of Koolhaas's architectural ideas, the genealogical narration lacked a dimension to situate these ideas in terms of his contemporaries, such as Peter Esienman and Bernard Tschumi, the 'situationist international' movement, and the French philosophies whose influence Koolhaas had admitted, especially the *Mythologies* of Roland Barthes.¹¹¹ This shortcoming was not itself a problem of Zhu's essay. And we do not mean that all the contemporaneous activities had an effect upon Koolhaas's architecture. The point here is that because the whole circumstance was absent in the Chinese context, the complexity and variety of European and American architectural

¹⁰⁹ Zhu, Yimin (2005a); Zhu, Yimin (2005b).

¹¹⁰ May 1968 gradually became known in China from the 1980s. Sometimes, it was compared to the 'Great Cultural Revolution' in China, and was called the 'Great Cultural Revolution in France'. For instance, the title of Laurent Joffrin's book *Mai 68 Histoire des Événements* (1988) was translated as *The 'Great Cultural Revolution' in France in May 1968* (2004). At the end of 2007, an enquiry of some unclear questions was posted in the ABBS in regard to Zhu Yimin's essay. The first question was: 'what was the content of the May 1968?' <http://www.abbs.com.cn/bbs/post/view?ppg=1&sty=1&age=0&bid=1&tpg=1&id=336127161>.

¹¹¹ On 5 May 2006, Rem Koolhaas gave a presentation on the *Delirious New York* at the University of Westminster. In his presentation, he said, 'I was deeply inspired by a sequence of French intellectuals. The most important one at that time was Roland Barthes. Barthes had just written *Mythologies*.'

discourse was flattened. As a consequence, this 'flattening' led to the impression that Koolhaas's ideas represented the main direction of architecture and urbanism in the 'west' rather than one of various explorations.

One reason that Koolhaas was popularised was his concern with the city. As the penetration of 'postmodernism' coincided with the pursuit of 'cultural roots' in the 1980s, the introduction of Koolhaas's theory corresponded with the fast growth of Chinese cities and the weakness of conventional thinking. In 1999, when the XX UIA Congress was held in Beijing, the problem of urbanisation was raised as one of the six themes. In 2002, Arata Isozaki and Yung Ho Chang initiated the first interdisciplinary 'm-Meeting' (*mouhui*) – a sort of 'new' version of the 'Any-Meeting' – in Beijing and Hangzhou.¹¹² The 'city' was one of its motives:

Yung Ho Chang thinks that from the viewpoint of the city, the phenomena of East Asia bring together many cultural issues in the world. From the current situation of city construction, it can be said that cities in Europe and the USA are almost dead. Only those in East Asia are growing, although the way [of their growth] is different.

[...]

Despite architecture itself has some problems that need to be resolved; indeed what really links things together is not architecture, but this greater problem, the city.¹¹³

If we think of the discussions on preserving and creating the characteristics of Chinese cities from the 1920s onwards, the

¹¹² The form of the 'm-Meeting' imitated and continued that of the 'Any-Meeting' in New York in the 1990s.

¹¹³ Shu, Kewen, Xing, Huimin and Huang, Yuan (2002). "张永和认为, 从城市角度出发, 东亚现象集中了很多世界性的文化问题。从城市建设现状看, 可以说现在欧洲、美国的城市几乎是死的, 只有东亚的城市是在生长着, 虽然方式不太一样。这是 M 会议在中国召开的动因之一。[...] 虽然建筑本身的确有一些问题需要解决, 但实际上真正把事情连起来的并不是建筑学, 恰恰是城市这个大问题。"

concerns of the city were not 'new'. But the conventional formal approach was far from adequate to explain and respond to complex operation of the city and the problems that it brought up in architectural production of the last two decades. The introduction of Koolhaas's writings opened up a dimension to envisage the 'reality' and to rethink the issues that had been taken for granted, such as cultural identity, preservation of history, etc. In 1998, when Ma Jianye wrote a review of Koolhaas's *Generic City*, his acceptance accompanied scepticism:

Through these detailed explanation, Koolhaas seems to say that the existence of the Generic City is only a fragment. It only has the present, without the past and the future. [...] Some of Koolhaas's viewpoints on the constraint of history in city development are sensible. Indeed, there are many problems of this kind in reality. But [he] should not completely deny history for this reason. The real situation now is that no matter how small a city is, it is proud of its own history.¹¹⁴

Up to the early years of this century, Koolhaas's pragmatic viewpoint gained more support, although this kind of scepticism did not entirely fade away.¹¹⁵ In particular, his research on the PRD caught the attention of Chinese architects. Although a number of them might not have been aware of the whole content of the *Great Leap Forward*, and might not feel very comfortable with the way in which the 'facts' were presented and interpreted, the topic of the research itself delivered a message that urban and architectural phenomena in the PRD

¹¹⁴ Ma, Jianye (1998). "库哈斯通过这些详细的解说似乎是想说明普通城市的存在只是个片断, 只有现在, 没有过去, 没有将来。[...]库哈斯的关于历史束缚城市发展的一些观点是有道理的, 而且确实存在很多这样的实际问题, 但不应因此而全部否定历史。现在的实际情况是, 无论多么小的城市都以自己的历史为荣。"

¹¹⁵ Wang, Hui (2003); Fan, Cheng (2004).

and China were 'distinct' and not entirely negative.¹¹⁶ This view was the reverse of conventional thinking, which hardly thought of the phenomena as having 'architectural' value because of its commercial orientation, its low quality, vulgar taste and lack of the 'cultural' content. Fan Cheng's remark indicated this change:

In Koolhaas's research on the PRD, the objects were the contemporary Chinese cities with which we are very familiar. Bridges, highways, airport, clusters of high-rise buildings and huge billboards were presented as photographic documents. Are our cities like this? To contemporary Asian architects, the strong national responsibility always drives them to think about how to preserve their own national culture. Architects are busy with integrating the local characteristics into modern architecture. However, from Koolhaas's viewpoint, it is impossible for architects to take any significant action to defend against the huge impetus of the global economy.¹¹⁷

However, the validity of Koolhaas's pragmatism was questioned.

Zhu Yiming argued:

In urban planning and city construction of contemporary China, ideological discussion is almost completely eliminated. What Koolhaas's Dutch pragmatism, as well as globalisation and the logic he promotes whereby architectural practice follows capital, can really bring to us is worth seriously thinking about and dealing with.

[...]

Koolhaas does not care about the mere pursuit of speed in Shenzhen and Zhuhai's early development. He even appreciates the instability and ambiguity that results from the uncertainty of the long-term objectives in urban planning, and summarises it at the level of methodology. However, in the materials that he provides, sociological information is completely absent. This leads to his research being seriously detached from China's reality. In fact, Zhuhai is paying the price for the rapid growth and unclear objectives of its early period.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Fan, Cheng (2004); Jiang, Yuanlun and Shi, Jian (2004); Wang, Hui (2006); Wang, Weiwei (2006).

¹¹⁷ Fan, Cheng (2004). pp. 23. "库哈斯对珠江三角洲的研究，对象是我们非常熟悉的当代中国城市。桥梁、高速路、航空港、楼群、巨大的售楼广告等被作为照片资料提了出来。我们的城市是这样的吗？对于当代亚洲建筑师来说，强烈的民族责任感使他们总是关注于如何保持自己的民族文化。建筑师们忙于将当地特色糅入到现代建筑之中。然而，在库哈斯看来，对于全球经济的巨大推动力，建筑师是不可能采取什么有意义的方式进行抵御的。"

¹¹⁸ Zhu, Yimin (2003). "在中国当代的城市规划和建设中，意识形态的讨论几乎已被剔除干净，库哈斯的荷兰式的实用主义，他所宣扬的全球化和建筑实践追随资本逻辑的做法到底能为我们带来些什么，值得认真思考 and 对待。"

[...]

库哈斯对深圳、珠海早期发展中单纯追求速度并不介意，甚至对城市规划由于远期目标不

Nonetheless, a shift in the evaluation of this research was noticeable. If at the beginning it was regarded as an interpretation of Chinese architecture and cities from a 'western' viewpoint, some people now thought that it provided potential to circumvent the dominance of 'western' standards over Chinese architectural practice and theory. In his *'Misreading' of the Great Leap Forward*, Wang Hui wrote:

The value of the *Great Leap Forward* is to readjust the pointer of aesthetics and the compass of knowledge. It makes the reality that Chinese people experience everyday, whether good or bad, to become the only reliable starting point. In Koolhaas's words, globalisation does not equal global knowledge. In one word, do not attempt to use any ready knowledge of the West to save China, but use the reality of China to understand contemporary architecture.¹¹⁹

Wang Weiwei expressed a similar opinion:

While architectural practice in China is gaining the increasing attention of the West and is brought into the whole geographic pattern, whether Chinese architectural theory is to continuously import waves of western theories to explain its own practice, or to produce its own theoretical models from its construction of architectural culture should be a question worthy of particular consideration. In this respect, Koolhaas's *Great Leap Forward* exemplifies how a valid theoretical model is produced, although the model itself is to return to the western world.¹²⁰

In a positive sense, this shifting position brought to light an intention to theorise architectural issues from practice rather

明确而导致的不确定性和模棱两可十分欣赏，并从方法论的高度加以总结。但在他提供的材料中，社会学方面的信息却是一片空白，这导致了他的研究严重背离中国的现实。事实上珠海现在正为早期的高速发展和目标不明确付出代价。”

¹¹⁹ Wang, Hui (2006). “《大跃进》的价值在于重新调整了审美的指针、知识的罗盘，使中国人民天天在体验的现实，无论是美好还是肮脏，变成中国实践唯一可信的起点。用库哈斯的话来说，全球性不等于全球知识，一句话，不要企图用任何现成的西方知识来救中国，用中国的现实来理解当代的建筑学吧。”

¹²⁰ Wang, Weiwei Ibid. “在中国建筑实践日益得到西方关注并被纳入整体地地理格局的同时，中国建筑理论是不断引进一轮又一轮的西方理论来阐释自身实践，还是从主题建筑文化的建设中生产自己的一些理论模式，应该是一个特别值得关注的问题。在这方面，库哈斯的《大跃进》倒是示范了一个有效的理论模式如何产生，尽管这个模式本身是为了返回西方世界。”

than applying formal theories to reality. But the comments made by Wang Hui and Wang Weiwei missed the point that the 'western' theories and standards never arrived as 'western' in the first place. At this point, this positive intention and conservative thinking would face the same problem which gave the priority to the differentiation of 'western' and 'Chinese' over real issues of architecture, since they both shared the assumption that 'western' architecture and 'Chinese' architecture were two homogeneous totalities, each irrelevant to the other. In consequence, they ran the danger of losing a critical position to examine and make benefit from architectural practice and production in China and existing architectural theories.

The introduction of Koolhaas's 'avant-garde' architecture may remind us that when 'postmodernism' and 'Deconstructive architecture' were imported, they were also conceived as 'new' directions of 'western modern' architecture one coming after another. Insofar as the 'avant-garde' was first categorised as an opposition to Chinese tradition rather than a systematic formation opposed to previous imports, it was basically regarded as the next trend within the category of the 'western modern'. Thus, although information across different cultures and countries had become easier to access, systematic 'misreadings' did not seem to be erased at the conceptual level.

4.2.3 The Issue of 'Cultural Identity'

Although the debate was initiated by the practice of foreign

architects, it was in fact more a reaction to the transition of 'architecture' from a state-directed occupation to an independent profession. This transition, which took about twenty years, meant that architecture benefited from the process of marketisation, but had to face the challenges caused by it. The intervention of commercial forces in architectural production and the re-identification of the status of the profession in society were the primary ones. The criticism of the 'European style' was one reaction to the challenges.¹²¹ Apparently, the involvement of international practice was not the cause of the challenges, but part of the transitional process. Yet, it posed a challenge to the creativity of Chinese architects and their status in the design market and society, particularly at a time when European architects were undertaking a number of national projects.

In 2001, two years after Paul Andreu won the commission for the National Grand Theatre and one year before a series of international competitions for the Olympic projects were launched, Liu Yichun, a young Chinese architect from Shanghai, stated his concern at the Forum of Young Architects of the Second Shanghai International Architectural Exhibition:

At the turn of the twenty-first century, when China is going to join the WTO, the State Council promises to gradually open the field of surveying and design to overseas investment in the next five years. China is about to become the base with the most potential for architectural development in the world. Faced with architects who will soon swarm in from various places around the world, what should Chinese architecture and Chinese architects do? My worry here has two aspects. One is how to set out from local conditions to create architecture really suitable for Chinese culture; and the other is that, in contest with western architects, are we going to fall to the status of 'second-class citizens' in the increasingly globalised

¹²¹ See: Section 3.2.1.

market for architectural design?¹²²

Liu's worry had its own context. In the case of the National Grand Theatre, although the project was implemented on the basis of collaboration between Paul Andreu and Tsinghua University, the role to be played by Chinese architects was generally understood to be that of assistants who were just to provide technical support. In other words, the anxiety that Chinese architects experienced concerned the 'creativity' of their works. Wu Danhua made this point explicitly:

If the winning scheme were not Koolhaas's, but the East China [Architectural Design & Research] Institute's, or the Beijing Institute [of Architectural Design]'s, or Tsinghua [University]'s, or Tongji [University]'s, what would we say? Probably many people would say that their works were too outdated, lacked imagination, and did not have creativity?¹²³

To Liu as well as many Chinese architects, this problem was initially caused by the speed of construction and the profit-driven market:

In a commercial society where rapid economic growth has just been initiated, design value is inevitably first of all linked to profit. [...] On the one hand, to seek quick success and instant benefits and to pursue the new and novel has already made our cities grotesque and gaudy; on the other hand, architects also find a short-cut in this commercial campaign. Very few people are interested in real innovation. [Most of them] only concentrate on compositional work that scrambles together images selected from foreign books [...] because [they] neither have the energy nor time to do original thinking.¹²⁴

¹²² Liu, Yichun (2001). "世纪之交，又逢中国即将加入 WTO，国务院承诺五年内逐步对外资开放勘察设计领域，中国实际上即将成为全球最具潜力的建设发展基地。面对即将涌入的世界各地的建筑师，中国的建筑与中国的建筑师，尤其我们年轻一代的建筑师，应该怎么办？这里担心的问题有两个范畴，一是如何从本土出发，创作真正适合中国文化的建筑；一是在与西方建筑师的竞争中，我们是否会在日益全球化的建筑设计市场上沦为‘二等设计公民’？”

¹²³ Wu, Danhua (2003). "如果中标的方案不是库哈斯的，而是华东院或者北京院的，又或是清华、同济的，我们又会作怎样的评论？恐怕不少人会说他们的作品太土气、缺乏想象力，没有创造性吧？”

¹²⁴ Liu, Yichun (2001). "在一个经济快速增长的初始化商业社会，设计的价值观首先当然是要与效益挂钩的。[...] 一方面，急功近利、追新求异的建筑已将我们的城市变得光怪陆离；另一方

From this comment, it is easy to imagine that because the market boom did not give Chinese architects enough time and space to rethink the problems in practice, to develop original ideas and to refine their projects, their job somehow became a matter of recycling 'new' images. By contrast, foreign architects who were free from this pressure would have a chance to meet the demand of the market for 'newer' creations. So when Koolhaas discovered the 'quantity' and 'speed' that Chinese architects achieved, Chinese architects themselves were suffering from the problem of 'quality' and 'originality' that sustained the status of the profession.¹²⁵

The question of the 'creativity' of Chinese architects was intensified when European architects won a whole series of competitions for national projects. As mentioned above, because of the significance of the projects, the failure of Chinese architects was not simply a matter of losing the commissions, but rather a challenge to their authority to represent the 'modern' culture of the nation. Historically, this authority had been legitimised by official recognition and the support of the government in power through a series of national projects, such as the Sun Yat-san Mausoleum in 1925 and the Ten Grand Buildings of Beijing in 1959.¹²⁶ Although this kind of collaboration was not consistently smooth, it did allow the

面建筑师们在这场商业大战中也找到了乖巧的方法，真正的创新已很少有人问津了，只是集中精力在选用国外书籍中的图片作东拼西凑的组合作，[...]因为既没有精力也没有时间去做那些原创性的思考了。”

¹²⁵ Koolhaas, Rem, Inaba, Jeffrey and etc. (2001). pp. 161.

¹²⁶ See: Section 2.1.3.

identity of Chinese architects to be associated with the idea of the nation's self-reliance. Consequently, the absence of Chinese architects from recent national projects as the result of these competitions seemed to signal an end to this relationship of patronage, and the associations that had been established by official discourse in the past.

One factor that should not be underestimated was the bureaucratic conventions that existed in architectural production and city construction. At least since the 1950s, the constructions sponsored by the Central Government and in Beijing were regarded as models – formally, programmatically and organisationally – for local authorities to follow.¹²⁷ This convention had little to do with political ideology or architectural style, but with the administrative system. Although this convention might have had less effect than before, the actions of the Central Government still indicated the direction of state policy in constructing public buildings and cities. With the addition of another convention by which references were made to actual buildings in the real estate market, the influence of the national projects would be enlarged. It is not difficult for us to understand therefore why more than one hundred architectural and engineering experts appealed to the Central Government arguing that Paul Andreu's proposal for the National Grand Theatre would 'bring bad influence on the direction of our country's architecture'.¹²⁸ Thus, under pressure from the commercial market, the official recognition and bureaucratic conventions in

¹²⁷ See: Section 1.2.1, pp.66-67.

¹²⁸ Peng, Peigen (2000); Wang, Zhili (2000).

architectural production, the issue of creating 'architecture suitable for Chinese culture' was raised as a weapon with which to defend the status of Chinese architects, as well as to enhance their advantages and help initiate original creations.

There were at least two aspects to creating 'architecture suitable for Chinese culture': how the 'creation' was approached and how the 'Chinese culture' was identified. I believe that, here and in the debate, 'architecture suitable for 'Chinese culture' does not mean repeating 'tradition' or returning to the 'past', but rather intends to be something 'new' and 'modern'. Therefore, in regard to the first aspect, the questions become: if the 'new' creation inevitably adopts things from the 'imports', how were they absorbed? And if 'Chinese culture' inevitably referred to local 'tradition', how was 'tradition' dealt with? In relation to the second aspect, the question is: what kind of relation between the 'avant-garde' proposals and the 'Chinese culture' was considered?

In Liu Yichun's comment, what was not fully unfolded was the problem of 'compositional work' in opposition to 'original creation'. His description of putting together the existing images mirrored exactly the process of 'Beaux-Arts' 'composition'. As we discussed in Chapter Two, the 'Beaux-Arts' composition was a technique which could be used to produce 'new' things from existing resources, regardless of the kinds of building materials and aesthetic principles used, or whether the resources were

from the past or the present.¹²⁹ However, in general discussions, 'composition' was hardly referred to. Instead, the 'formal imitation' which resulted from its operation was often in question. For instance, while thinking that 'Chinese architects have many reasons to accept' Paul Andreu's National Grand Theatre, Zou Denong warned:

We hope that there will be more ideas and methods to resolve architectural problems in reality in the future, but we do not want to see round National Grand Theatres everywhere on either large or small scales.¹³⁰

The possibility of repetition and replication that worried Zou had two implications: the penetration of the 'new' building forms does not necessarily stimulate the emergence of 'new' architectural thinking and design; and the repetition itself indicates the absence of a dimension of conceptual abstraction in Chinese architectural discourses.

The operation of the 'Beaux-Arts' composition was probably more evident in the 'formal imitation' of 'tradition'. Since the emergence of modern Chinese architecture, it had underpinned the way in which 'tradition' was analysed and processed, and a 'new' building that incorporated 'tradition' could be produced.¹³¹ However, to some people, the 'formal imitation' originated from Chinese culture. In observing the entire process of international bids for the National Grand Theatre, Zhou Qinglin, the ex-Chief Architect of the China Architecture Design and Research Group,

¹²⁹ See: Section 2.1.1.

¹³⁰ Zou, Denong (2001). pp.607. "我们希望未来有更多解决建筑实际问题的观念和方法,不希望各地也出现大大小小的圆滚滚的小国家大剧院。"

¹³¹ See: Section 2.1.2, Section 2.1.3, and Section 2.2.2.

found different ways that Chinese architects and foreign architects responded to 'tradition', and ascribed them to 'cultural differences' between the 'eastern' or 'Chinese' and the 'western': the one looking for roots and harmony with the past, and the other pushing forward to the future. According to his summary, most Chinese architects 'took the issues of representing traditional Chinese culture, being harmonious with the surrounding buildings in form and reflecting the context of Chinese architecture' as the primary problem to resolve. On the contrary, 'western' architects

...did not think that it was very important to represent traditional style and to look like a Chinese grand theatre. They were more concerned with facing the future, making breakthroughs and having creativity, stressing that it should be a product of the times.

Although some of them tried to absorb some characteristics of traditional Chinese culture, their methods were different:

We often adopt the method of imitation, [which] takes traditional components as a sign to apply to practice intact or with slight transformation. But the Western [way is to] disintegrate, decompose and conceptually apply it. Therefore, from the form, sometimes it seems hard to see any connection. But with a careful analysis, what is behind [the proposals] can be seen.¹³²

Whether 'formal imitation' was what characterized Chinese culture of course needs further investigation. However, the problem here is that explaining the difference between 'formal imitation' and 'conceptual application' by the categories 'Chinese' and 'western' concealed the architectural difference between them. The difference, as we argued time and again in the thesis, was not simply an issue of 'cultural difference', nor

¹³² Zhou, Qinglin (2000). "在国外提供的方案中也有一些注意到考虑到吸收中国传统文化特征,但是他们的处理手法似乎与我们有所不同,我们经常采取模拟方式,把传统的构件作为一种符号,原封不动或是稍加变形地运用到实践中来,而西方则是把它打碎、分解、概念性地应用,所以只从形式上有时似乎看不出有什么联系,仔细分析时却能看出它的奥妙。"

the representation of it. Instead, it derived from two constructed systems – the one based on the 'composition' of the modified 'Beaux-Arts' system, and the other on the development passing through the course of 'modernism'. That is to say, it is the continuity of the 'Beaux-Arts' system that obstructed the Chinese architects from making 'new' creations either by drawing on things from the 'west' or from 'tradition'.

In the debate, although the 'culture' or 'Chinese culture' was an often-used term, what it meant was not well defined. In regard to the relation between the 'avant-garde' proposals and 'Chinese culture', some people, like Wang Mingxian and Wu Danhua, thought that they could make 'new' contributions to contemporary culture and signalled the emergence of a 'new' architectural culture in China; but others, such as Wu Chen, argued that they corresponded to a 'bad cultural' phenomenon and signified a crisis in Chinese architectural culture. Nevertheless, two things were clear. First, it opposed the commercial culture driven by the market. Second, it was 'modern' rather than 'traditional', although 'tradition' might be referred to. However, what the 'modern Chinese' culture was and would be was in question.

Take the comment of Yu Kongjian and Li Wei from Beijing University.¹³³ For Yu and Li,

Today, Chinese architectural culture that acts as a national identity

¹³³ Apparently, not everyone agreed with Yu Kongjian's and Li Wei's opinions. But I think that this example is justified in terms of the issues that their comments touched upon and intended to address. Yu Kongjian had his landscape education in China and did his PhD in Harvard University. Now he is the Head of Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research of Beijing University.

card is facing a crisis in many respects, including the loss of vernacular culture because of the prosperity of the architectural market, the ruin of traditional culture in the city construction boom, the impact of globalisation upon vernacular culture, etc. This kind of crisis of architectural culture once again results from the crisis of cultural identity. The pursuit of the big and the foreign and the emergence of the European style in the construction of urban landscape all represent such a crisis.¹³⁴

In their terms, the cultural crisis was reflected in three 'identifications': the 'ancient western empire' represented by the penetration of the 'European style'; the 'feudal Chinese classic' seen in the palaces, temples and tombs of ancient China; and the 'imperial modern west' exemplified by the National Grand Theatre and the new CCTV HQ.¹³⁵

[At the same time,] we begin to accept the so-called 'most modern' architecture and landscape. The most remarkable case is the National Grand Theatre. It is a masterpiece that the French architect designs in the capital of China. It will force Chinese people in the future to identify with it. The other case is the CCTV HQ. In a media age, the CCTV HQ is equal to the most authoritative symbol of the nation, a national identity card that cannot be mis-recognised. It is what Chinese people are about to identify with. I do not want to comment on them from the viewpoint of architecture. They might be great buildings. But behind them, the people who accept this kind of building actually accept a sort of 'imperial' architecture in the psychology of the 'upstart'. Nowadays, it is impossible for any country that has experienced the development of modernisation to build this kind of building, because they contradict the basic spirit of modern -- rationality, science and democracy, and form following function. But [we are] using 10 times and even more money to build up a showcase building with the same function. It is in contemporary China that those 'imperial' architects realise their 'imperial' dreams.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Yu, Kongjian and Li, Wei (2004). pp.6. "作为民族身份证的中国建筑文化在今天正面临着多方面的危机, 包括欣欣向荣的建筑市场下地域文化的失落、城市大建设高潮中对传统文化的大破坏、全球化对地域文化的撞击等。这种建筑文化危机正是又一次文化认同危机的结果, 城市景观建设中的贪大求洋、欧陆风的兴起无不是这种危机的表现。"

¹³⁵ The three phrases are literal translation. ancient western empire (古典的西方帝国) (*gudian de xifang diguo*); feudal Chinese classic (封建的中国古典) (*fengjian de zhongguo gudian*); imperial modern west (帝国的现代西方) (*diguo de xiandai xifang*).

¹³⁶ Yu, Kongjian and Li, Wei (2004). pp.6-7. "[而与此同时], 我们也开始认同于所谓 '最现代' 的建筑和景观, 杰出的例证是国家大剧院, 它是法国建筑师在中国首都的 '杰作', 它将迫使未来的中国人去认同。另一个例证是中国央视大楼, 在传媒时代央视大楼相当于一个民族最权威的象征, 一张不可误认的民族身份证, 这是中国人正在准备认同的。我本人不试图从建筑学本身的角度来评价它们, 它们可能都是了不起的建筑。但是这种建筑的背后, 作为接受了这种建筑的人们, 实际上是用一种 '暴富' 的心态来接受一种 '帝国' 的建筑。当今, 任何一个经历过

In opposition to these phenomena, Yu and Li advocated the creation of a vernacular city and landscape by 'respecting common culture and humanity and returning to land and locality, thus capturing the ethnic [sic] identity of the contemporary Chinese and re-establishing a harmony between people and land'.¹³⁷

Yu and Li's comment does not sound unfamiliar to us. From the 1920s onwards, the insistence upon the root of 'Chinese culture' in architecture was reiterated. Whereas the references might vary from time to time, the insistence itself was associated with the political task of enhancing national identity and pride, and also with the self-conscious process of identifying and differentiating the architectural profession itself, so as to differentiate it from the work of craftsmen in the 1920s, to define the artistic nature of architecture in the 1950s, and to distinguish architects from general engineers and to resist the commercial dominance of the 1980s and 90s.¹³⁸ Yu and Li's intention was not far from these. But as we discussed before and as their comment here shows, this insistence was not about 'Chinese' and even 'culture' itself, but about legitimating and elevating the status of the architectural profession.

Certain differences were noticeable. First, Yu and Li's criticism of the 'cost' of the national projects differed from Liang

现代化发展的国家都不可能再盖这种建筑，因为，它们违背了基本的现代精神——理性、科学与民主、形式服从功能：而是用 10 倍、甚至更昂贵的花费，在造一个具有同样功能的展示建筑。正是在当代的中国，那些‘帝国’建筑师们实现了他们的‘帝国’梦想。”

¹³⁷ Ibid. pp.5. From my point of view, according to the content of the essay, the term 'ethnic' that was originally used here does not seem proper. The term 'national' should be more precise.

¹³⁸ See: Section 2.1.3.

Sicheng's in respect to the 'inherent Chinese style' in the 1930s.¹³⁹ Second, their comments implied a criticism of architecture with 'Chinese characteristics' in earlier practice. Although these criticisms were not particularly 'new', they indicated two potentialities in the current situation: to acquire architectural knowledge independent from official designation, and to move away from the constraints of the 'Beaux-Arts' system. However, these potentialities seemed to be obstructed by the prioritisation of the 'Chinese identity' in architecture. On the one hand, as far as this prioritisation conformed to the official ideology and symbolic function of architecture, architectural evaluation was largely entangled with formal representation of the buildings and the analysis of the nature of the production of the projects was absent. On the other hand, insofar as the 'Chinese identity' was abstract and its formal representation could be interpreted differently, it prevented the formation of any consistent architectural position. While Yu and Li put the eclectic 'European style' and the neo-modernist projects into one category, not only were the architectural differences between them concealed, but it also contradicted the criterion – 'form following function' – that they advocated. Indeed, in the debate, neither the 'Chinese identity' nor the 'culture' was sufficiently elaborated architecturally or in urban terms. From the point of view of this thesis, the underlying problem is that there is no homogeneous essence that could be identified as 'Chinese' in architecture, just as the modern spirit -

¹³⁹ Liang Sicheng's defence see: Section 2.1.3, pp.137-138. It is worthy of note that in either case, 'cost' was never an economic issue, or one that was purely justified by reference to economic laws. In the architectural discourse of China, it was related to how a building or an architectural direction was justified and accounted for.

- 'rationality, science and democracy, and form following function' – that Yu and Li promoted could not.

Look back at the discussions of the thesis, many issues raised in the current debate were not 'new' – such as the paradox of pursuing the 'new', the relation between 'modern' and 'tradition', the question of creativity and originality, the loss of the character of cities, the promotion of 'cultural identity', resistance to commercialisation, the elevation of the status of architecture and architects, etc. From a historical point of view, the debates on them often culminated at the moment when the rapid growth of the cities forced a considerable change in the physical environment, and the emergence of 'new' architectural practice, either in term of social requirements, or in terms of building forms, types, technologies, programmes, architectural concepts, etc. To architecture, the central paradox that has been highlighted by our discussion has been this: just when rapid transformation has enabled architects and architecture to play a recognisable and important role in the process, it also has threatened the autonomy of the profession itself. This is nothing peculiar to China.

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